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W. H. Auden:

Two Poems in Sequence

By Sister M. Janet, S.C.L.

IT IS perhaps impossible to read the poetry of Auden since 1939 without sensing its symbolic and thematic unity. And probably in no comparable sampling of his work is this unity more transparent than in the two semi-dramatic poems he published in 1945 under the corporate title *For the Time Being*. The two poems, "The Sea and the Mirror" and "For the Time Being," bear such basic resemblances one to the other than it is possible to suggest that they are poems in sequence, a sequence beyond the patent ones of time and text.

First of all, it would be well to stress that both poems are, in themselves, unified and integrated works of art; that they neither enlist the aid of the same structural skeleton nor employ the same *dramatis personae*; that an organic continuum was not necessarily the poetic intention.

Granted this, both poems still share the same themes: both probe the wounds of modernity—*anxiety, guilt, despair, isolation*—and both have as their common central concern, the problem of reality. In "The Sea and the Mirror" it is the restricted relation of art (the mirror) to reality (the sea) that is explored. In "For the Time Being" the problem broadens out over a frankly existential substratum to the consideration of the cardinal reality, the center from which all lesser reality takes its beginning and has its reference, the reality of the Incarnation.

And even beyond this mutuality of themes, "For the Time Being" seems to begin where "The Sea and the Mirror" ends. It is, as it were, its sequel. "The Sea and the Mirror" follows man through that isolation of the artist from reality which brings him ultimately and inevitably to the "unabiding void," the Existentialist's abyss. And it is here that "For the Time Being" finds man (now all mankind) at that eternal intrusion of the Timeless into time, of the infinite into the finite that is the Incarnation.

"For the Time Being" thus amplifies and illuminates "The Sea and the Mirror." Man, a Prospero enchanted by his Ariel and enslaving his Caliban, is projected by the second poem into timelessness. Or as Kierkegaard has said: "In relation to the absolute (Christ), there is only one tense—the present; and with respect to Him, there is only one situation—contemporaneity. . . And thus every man can be contemporary only with the age in which he lives—and then with one thing more: with Christ's life on earth; for Christ's life on earth . . . stands for itself outside of history."

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Tracing this developing idea through the two poems, note at the outset that Auden commandeers *The Tempest* as the frame of reference for "The Sea and the Mirror." Indeed, he lays claim in a subtitle to a "commentary" on this most mystifying and magical of Shakespeare's plays. It is this—but more. Prospero is the modern artist, severed by his art from society. But now he is saying good-bye to his enchanted world to return to the real one, "oceans away . . . / Sailing alone, out over seventy thousand fathoms." He is a man who has learned what magic is—"the power to enchant / That comes from disillusion," a man who has been intoxicated by his art and now awakens "cold sober, / With all my unanswered wishes and unwashed days / Stacked up around my life," a man with one "impervious disgrace"—Caliban, his world of flesh.

"Soundly hunted/By their own devils into their human selves," the other characters take lyric leave of the island. For though Prospero's magic has failed as an end, it has not failed as a means; always it is the mirror, not the sea (reality). The "extravagant children who lately swaggered / Out of the sea like gods" will return to life as men, pardoned all. Everyone will be pardoned except Antonia, the symbol of aloneness, forever standing outside the circle of Prospero's art, forever declining the insights of art that would awaken him from his self-regarding dream.

In the second half of "The Sea and the Mirror," Auden resorts to prose to convey the metaphysical curve of his thought. With ironic overtones, Caliban summarizes the dread of the complacent, "for if the intrusion of the real has disconcerted and incommoded the poetic, that is a mere bagatelle compared to the damage which the poetic would inflict if it ever succeeded in intruding upon the real."

In a second address Caliban recalls the artist's profitable partnership with Ariel through the enchanted years. But it is a partnership which now leaves the artist with "but a gibbering fist-clenched creature . . . who is not a dream amenable to magic but the all too solid flesh you must acknowledge as your own." This is the artist who has ignored the other side of reality, whose Ariel becomes his Caliban.

It is only then that Caliban can warn "not to engage either of us [Ariel or Caliban] as your guide," rehearsing the consequences of both routes: "the facile gladhanded highway" of Caliban, the commitment to sensuous reality, to the many, as the Shepherds in "For the Time Being"; or "the virtuous averted tract" of Ariel, the commitment to the idealistic, to the one, as in the Wise Men in "For the Time Being." Both routes have but one end—estrangement from truth, from reality.

Here Caliban finds himself face to face with the predicament of the artist, dedicated to picture by his art man's condition of estrangement from the truth, and bound to fail either by pointing up the condition at the expense of the

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truth, or the truth at the expense of the condition, or, more precariously still, by depicting the estrangement itself which only enchants the egoism of man. It is the danger and limit of art that it is a mirror where man may fall in love with his own distorted image and "forget what manner of man he is." The artist's intention—"to make you forgettably conscious of the ungarnished offended gap between what you so questionably are and what you are commanded without any question to become"—is Auden's fancy of the "greatest grandest opera" rendered by "a very provincial touring company indeed."

It is, however, this very failure of art to capture reality fully that is its supremest success. It brings man eventually to that "unabiding void," that "essential emphatic gulf," of which the mirror and the stage were but "feebly figurative signs." Art must have been tried and found wanting, for it is at the moment that words fail that man hears the Word, at the moment when man reaches the dead end of life-by-the-mind or life-by-the-flesh that the wholly other life, the life of grace, is revealed across the abyss of faith. Here at the abyss man stands in the isolation and disintegration of his fractured experience, while beyond the abyss are the "great coherences," "the restored relation."

THIS IS the abyss man has reached in time. It is there that Auden places him in the second poem, "For the Time Being," in the eternally present that is the moment of the Incarnation. The "final dissonant chord of that performance . . . so indescribably, inexcusably awful" is to time what Advent is to timelessness: "This is the Abomination. This is the Wrath of God," this is the "outrageous novelty" of the unknown seeking the known.

As Auden brought the artist to the edge of the abyss in "The Sea and the Mirror," so in "For the Time Being" he presents at the timeless abyss those who come by other ways than art. Here is the archetype, disintegrated by original sin; Joseph, the man dreading the leap of faith, begging but "one Important and elegant proof," learning that "No, you must believe; Be silent, and sit still." Here those who have made the leap of faith, Mary and Joseph, are asked to pray for those who have not: for the Romantics, misled by "moonlight and the rose"; for the "proper and conventional . . . who take the prudent way"; for "the dull the Average Way." Here are all the wise men—scientist, historian, philosopher—who dread the star and seek the escape of death and the shepherds—the flesh, the Calibans, the escapists of the return to the womb.

Simeon, whose "eyes have seen Thy salvation," the man who has exhausted all possibilities before reaching that ultimate frontier where "our redemption is no longer a question of pursuit but of surrender to Him who is always and everywhere present," is here. Present also are Herod, the rationalist, the liberal, the secularist, the man of compromises, the rational repulsion at the absurdity of Christianity; his soldiers, symptomatic of the utterly indifferent, the zeroes, the

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unaware and untouched; and Rachel, who having learned the "language of wounds," comes by grief to the abyss.

Here, indeed, is the end of the journey, as far as man can go by himself or with any created guide. Here he stops at the absurdity of the manger, for the folly of the crib is but prelude to the folly of the cross, the scandal and the stumbling-block of a crucified God. But to those who will see God in a manger, "not as some prophetic vision of what might be, but with the eyes of our own weakness as to what actually is, we are bold to say we have seen our salvation." This is the beginning of the wholly other life. This is the reality.

Yet, Auden reminds us, "to those who have seen the Child, however dimly, however incredulously, The Time Being is, in a sense, the most trying time of all." For it is the time that must be redeemed from insignificance in the "Land of Unlikeness," the "Kingdom of Anxiety," the "World of the Flesh." But in the land beyond the abyss "now and forever, we are not alone":

He is the Way.
Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness;
You will see rare beasts and have unique adventures.

He is the Truth.
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;
You will come to a great city that has expected your return
for years.

He is the Life.
Love Him in the World of the Flesh;
And at your marriage all its occasions shall dance for joy.

The Light and Shadow of Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull*

By Donald B. Sands

WHEN *Felix Krull* appeared in 1955 in what was to be its final form, critical response was varied, but generally it was characterized by genial approbation, although, in some cases, of an adroitly qualified kind. In one quarter, it was accepted as Thomas Mann's "octogenerian comedy," arresting, not only because of intrinsic appeal, but also because it appeared as late in the life of the author as it did. The fact that it followed *The Black Swan* seemed to some significant because, however frivolous *Felix Krull* might be, it was not morbid or distasteful. *The Black Swan* was immensely uncomfortable in its physiological implications and reviewers in general seemed incapable of going beyond the physiology. American tastes in particular just could not adjust, and there was some feeling that Mann's penultimate work was the product of senile decline. *Felix Krull*, on the other hand, was relatively easy to handle. It could be, and often was, taken as a light *Zwischenstück*, something which a genius might produce as a lark after his labors on a major work. Perhaps this assumption was salutary because it sanctioned a naïve enjoyment of *Felix Krull* on the part of the reading public which the aura of massive seriousness usually given to Mann's other works must certainly have precluded. An occasional critic was snide. He wrote that *Felix Krull* was Thomas Mann's best work; his words, however, revealed not so much what he thought of *Krull* as what he thought of Mann's other novels—*Faustus*, for example, and *The Magic Mountain* and the Joseph stories—although *Krull* may indeed possess far greater literary potential than such a critic would be willing to realize.

Mann's public, for its part, may not have been any less sympathetic to *Felix Krull* than it had been to the bulkier volumes which appeared just before and during the War, but the novel does not have topical implications and probably suffered for this reason. Yet the English translation by Denver Lindley, which Knopf published in 1955 and The New American Library in 1957, is eminently readable and it preserves gracefully much of the intentionally ornate style of the original. It is hard to gauge the initial success it may have had on its own, not its topical merits, and on those of its translation; but of all Mann's works, *Felix Krull* would seem to be the one that should have the largest distribution in soft-cover format, and it is surprising that the Signet Book edition appeared in a conservative red, gold and blue cover without any pictorial design at all.

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Depiction of Felix fading out into the arms of Madame Kuckuck would have given Mann an opportunity to reach a segment of the American public he had not reached prior to the publication of *Felix Krull*.

AS YET scholarship has left *Krull* pretty much alone. No one so far has painstakingly documented how much Mann's hero owes to the figure of a Romanian swindler who was confined in a French prison in the early years of this century. Serious humanistic evaluation of the novel has done much better. Three divergent studies have appeared and so complex and rich is the novel they evaluate that each seems just as cogent and valid as the other. Victor Lange in his "Betrachtungen zur Thematik von *Felix Krull*" (*Germanic Review*, October 1956) sees *Felix Krull* as a study revealing how an individual struggles to sustain the inviolability of his own identity. Erich Heller in his "Felix Krull oder die Komödie des Künstlers" (*Wort und Wahrheit*, January 1956) narrowly focuses on the idea that Felix is no less of an artist and creator than Adrian Leverkühn, Gustav Aschenbach, or any of Mann's other figures, but with the simple difference that the swindler's artistry consists in just living and acting out, while that of the others is evidenced in productions that can exist independent of their physical being. Paul Altenberg, whose study "Thomas Manns letztes Werk" (*Schweizer Monatshefte*, January 1957) is perhaps the most penetrating of the three, sees Felix's double life as not very much different from that led in deference to social mores by any great man, whether he be a great artist or prophet or swindler. Yet none of these studies treats Felix as a genius, although it is as a *Genieroman* that the novel rises grandly to the heights of comedy and becomes a unique achievement among Western European novels, quite similar to and on a par with Henry Fielding's *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*.

Dr. Faustus can get in the way when one attempts to evaluate *Felix Krull*. The specter of a Faustian cataclysm is still so near that *Faustus* has yet to receive its due appreciation as a novel rather than, as is usual, an international apology for one cultural complex *vis-à-vis* another. Adrian Leverkühn and Felix Krull do, however, stand at opposite poles. They can be labeled in traditional Schillerian fashion, one as *sentimentalisch* and the other as *naïv*. Facile though the identification of their polarity may be, it is too tempting to be ignored; and yet it can become a bothersome thing when cultural and aesthetic evaluations are based on it in order to determine, among other things, Mann's own sympathies. For example, if Adrian is Mann's object lesson that "arrogant seclusion" and "ascetic orgiastic self-destruction" are ultimately evil, as Eric Heller assumes in his "Thomas Mann's Conception of the Creative Artist," (*PMLA*, September 1954), then Felix can be taken as the object lesson for the opposing camp. Such a conclusion is logical; its ridiculousness indicates the

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weakness in assuming that any of Mann's major personalities is simple enough to serve as justification of a socio-political tendency. Criticism of the last two decades to the contrary, Mann's genius was not a propagandistic one; and it did not erect one image to demolish another. Each of its creations is a literary embodiment of complex and contradictory elements, and it is impossible to hold one for long within the bounds of a currently sanctioned unilinear ethos, and not simply because the characters themselves reflect, as do real human beings, dumbfounding ambivalences. The critical ethos of any generation is time conditioned, while that of a great artist is, or should be, timeless—as timeless as any human phenomenon can be.

Felix is, if Joseph is excepted, of all Mann's heroes the most triumphant, the most normal, the happiest—the only one, in fact, who transcends race, language, and culture to become a truly international *Weltkind*. His success is conditioned by his nature; he remains, to turn to Peter Heller, "close to the earth, in loving unison with his physical appearance and his vital impulses. The sensuous and the sensual are his domains." But there is a surprising feature about Heller's description. It was written without *Krull*, or *Krull* in its ultimate and possibly finished form, in mind: it describes, not a swindler, but Goethe and Tolstoi, the two arch-representatives of the naïve genius. They are further characterized by Heller with words that are strikingly applicable to Krull, the confidence man:

As he is fond of his own body, so he is preoccupied in his art with the concrete human figure. His sharp senses, his strong eroticism, his sensitivity to natural phenomena, his concern and intuitive sympathy with the organic, derive from the same source. Goethe's and Tolstoi's charm, their love of sports and games, their sense of well-being were manifestations of a zest for life. The naïve genius approves of, and enjoys, his own being. Hence he accepts and appreciates reality, and he observes it with sympathetic precision.

CARLOS BAKER, who reviewed *Felix Krull* in the *Nation* of October 1, 1955, noted the excellent construction of the novel, something other reviewers failed to see, perhaps because "picaresque" equates so easily with "episodic," and this in turn so easily with "formless." But Baker also noted the similarity in style and idiom *Felix Krull* bears to Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The identity between the two, however, goes much further. It begins, to be sure, with style, with the long looping periods full of sentence-long interrupters and clauses within clauses, the *Einschachtelung* of Goethe's mature prose. But subject matter immediately substantiates the identity also. Goethe's loving treatment of his patrician home in Frankfurt-am-Main is paralleled by Felix's description of his native villa on the Rhine, which, instead of being replete with symbols of a civic-minded and Rococo past, is appropriately full

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of tawdy show pieces, like real spinning wheels, *étagères*, curtain rods in the form of halberds, portieres made of bamboo tied with strings of glass beads, and a door provided with "an ingenious mechanism activated by air pressure which played with a pleasing tinkle the opening bars of Strauss's *Freut euch des Lebens*."

Felix's Catholicism is something difficult to reconcile, but Goethe's moral sensibilities, at least in the literary sense, have strong affinity with the temperament of South Germany, although Felix's amorality must be attributed, not to religion or to geography, but to the influence of aesthetics and to the nature of the naïve genius. Although Felix enjoys no Frederike and no idyllic Sesenheim, the pedagogic joys of the voluptuous maid and the Frankfurt of the Hungarian Rozsa are parallels. In general terms, however, great buoyancy coupled with design characterizes Felix's account of his pre-Parisian social life; similar buoyancy and just as unabashed design inform great portions of the earlier sections of Goethe's autobiography.

To be sure, appearances of a *Dictung und Wahrheit* parody end when Felix becomes lift-boy at the Hotel Saint James and Albany. It need not after all continue, since its initial inspiration both in detail and style is so strong that Felix can ultimately carry on very well as Felix. But Goethean elegance persists and individuals constantly carry Goethean associations, with possibly the Twentymans, Lord Strathbogie, and Venosta excepted. Diane Philibert, for example, who makes love in alexandrines, recalls the Goethe of the "Römische Elegan" who tapped out hexameters on his beloved's back; and Andromache, *La fille de l'aire*, has several Goethean prototypes, most notably the anonymous contortionist of the "Venezianische Epigramme." Once Felix loses his Goethean identity, however, once he exists as an autonomous literary creation, another Goethe double appears, another Felix in fact, in the form of Professor Kuckuck, Curator of the Museum of National History in Lisbon. He is a German by birth, a Portuguese by choice, and, one may assume in his maturer years, a natural scientist by vocation. He gives Felix a lecture as they sit eating on the Lisbon-bound express, a lecture that begins harmlessly enough with a description of the development of the horse from the Eocene tapir and that ends somewhat darkly with comment on the origin of life and the essence of being.

MUCH CAN be made of the irony in *Felix Krull*. It is pervasive and demanding. But one portion of the novel seems to thrust forward a simple, urgent surface meaning: it is Kuckuck's long eschatological commentary. The reader catches himself suddenly giving full credence to Kuckuck's words; he lets his guard down; he does not read with half his attention given to the sense and the other half to its ironic overtones. Admittedly, the skull, ribs and shoulder blade of a long extinct tapir which Kuckuck brings from Paris remind one of

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Goethe's concern with the intermaxillary bones. They undoubtedly are intended to, but the tapir only starts Kuckuck off. He rambles on and on; and although his subject matter is that of Goethe's poem on being, "*Das Vermächtnis*," its tone of bleakness and pessimism is strange and foreign. Man, according to Kuckuck, is assuredly an animal; his one distinguishing feature is not his prehensile digits, his language, or his culture, but simply his "knowledge of Beginning and End"; for life itself is "limited to certain clearly defined conditions which have not always existed and will not exist forever." What have aeons of evolution produced? A simple organism with "one opening in its cell body for ingestion and another for egestion." No more really is required to be an animal and, he adds, "not much more to be a human being either, in most cases." What of the magnificent human brain? "In point of structural development," he says, it "is closest to that of the rat." And what of the supremacy of culture? It is transient also; one need only reflect on civilized peoples: "the finest tired . . . and became primitive and sank drunkenly into barbarism."

If Felix echoed Kuckuck's words before the King of Portugal, they would achieve a sort of structural justification; but he does not. Aside from a few allusions scattered here and there in succeeding chapters, they remain isolated, almost as if they were in part an interpolation. Should we assume that they are Mann's summation of the eschatology of a Goethe image—in short, of his final image of the naïve genius? The assumption is tempting. Fritz Strich in his essay, "Schiller und Thomas Mann," (*Neue Rundschau*, LXVIII, 1, 1957) finds the octogenarian Mann still admiring Schiller's idealism and particularly Schiller's faith that freedom of the spirit, whatever its cost in effort and privation, is the key to social and aesthetic problems. At the same time, Strich leaves no doubt in his reader's mind that Mann at the very end of his life was tormented by the thought that art may not be after all the supremely humanizing and civilizing agent. Mann was then occupied with a study of Chekhov, prompted apparently by a comment Chekhov made toward the end of his life, an admission that he himself could find no ultimate truth or value in his own writings or in his own mind either. Such pessimism is not compatible with a Schiller image, nor is it compatible at first glance with a Goethe image.

The idealistic nature of the Schillerian spirit, the implicit assumption that the world is good only as it should be; its moralistic tendencies, the preoccupation with problems of ethics and morality; its sickly atmosphere, the suffering through and grappling with decay and death—all imply a dissatisfaction with life as it is, a dissatisfaction that too easily can be confused with an attitude of basic pessimism. Actually the truth lies in the opposite direction. The sentimental genius, if he does not possess unquestioning affirmation of what exists, cannot deny the validity of the ideals which prompt his endeavors. If he does,

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he dries up the wellsprings of his being. The natural, vital Goethean spirit, on the other hand, despite its enthusiastic cleaving to the world as it is, its proneness to reflect the healthy amorality of nature in its own amoral vigor, and its ready enjoyment of society and position, is ultimately reluctant to accept or even incapable of sheer transcendent belief with its attendant conviction that man's spiritual creations are universally valid—particularly so, when belief itself seems to contradict nature and the natural order. Here is a basis for actual pessimism. Here is the way to a denial, perhaps in Goethe's case only occasionally prefigured, of the eventual worth of human ideals. Here also is the explanation of the darkness of the Kuckuck-Goethe personality, which is one side of the naïve genius, just as the lightness and verve of the Felix-Goethe personality is its other and more human side.

IT IS TOO early to predict what literary disposition will finally be allotted *Felix Krull*, but indications are that among Mann's works it will occupy a somewhat special place. It is his comic *Volksbuch* and it is likely to be read whether other of his works are not. It has been made into a movie and a second film version is contemplated. It has been reduced by Paul Ackermann of Boston University to a well-liked language text and it has been selling well in its soft-cover translation for the past two years. But light as it appears beside Mann's longer works, it mirrors his final reflections on the Goethean spirit and embodies his most telling account of its ultimate limitations.

T. C. Murray: Ireland on the Stage

By Matthew T. Conlin, O.F.M.

ON MARCH 7, 1959, during a theatrical season which was bringing to New York audiences an unusually great number of revivals and some new plays by Irish dramatists, T. C. Murray, among the last of the prominent pioneers of the Irish Dramatic Movement, passed away quietly in Dublin. He was eighty-six. Author of sixteen plays and one novel, retired Headmaster of the Inchicore Model Schools and distinguished Catholic layman, Murray had been living in what he called "semi-cloistered retirement" with two of his daughters at his home, number eleven in Sandymount Avenue, two doors from where his fellow Irish dramatist, W. B. Yeats, was born.

Writing in the *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* in 1951 the late Una Ellis-Fermor of the University of London urged that Murray's work "be estimated yet more highly than it at present is." His *Autumn Fire* had the distinction of being the first full-length Irish play ever to be televised to American audiences, but his dramatic works have remained practically unknown in our country except among those who may have seen them produced abroad or those who might be able to recall the riots in Boston and Philadelphia when the Abbey players presented his *Birthright* on their turbulent American tour of 1911. In Ireland, however, his better plays have enjoyed steady popularity: Dublin's Radio Eireann frequently offers recordings of them with their original Abbey Theatre casts, and at a recent Drama Feis in Cork, five Murray plays were awarded prizes in the competition.

Alone among Irish playwrights Murray brought to the stage a realistic and fully sympathetic treatment of the religious spirit of the largest segment of Irish life, the country; and, as the Dublin critic Thomas Hogan once remarked: "... if the Abbey ever justified itself as an Irish theatre, it did so by T. C. Murray" (*Envoy*, Nov. 1950). His awareness of the Catholic faith of his people, their love for Ireland and their passion for the land pervades his work. The best of his plays concern themselves with the life and the longings of the Irish farmer class. In one form or another he found in them the theme of the love for the land and the matchmaking which is closely allied to it. The domination of rural parents and the revolt of country youth were also themes close to his heart and apt for his dramatic art. On some aspect of these elements Murray constructed his best plays. Even when he began to write in 1909 these were themes already

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familiar to the audiences of the new Irish Theatre. It was his particular contribution that he molded them into a form of drama that is excellent in its craftsmanship, and, because tragedy is the more enduring form, permanent in its worth.

MURRAY was born in 1873 near Macroom in the County Cork, a section of Ireland rich in literary genius. In one of many letters sent to this writer over the years he reminisced: "My father ran a meal and flour store. In addition there was a public house and grocery. He managed the meal store; the other part of the concern was virtually my mother's. Our customers were mostly of the farming class—not a few were relatives—and it was through the friendly traffic with these that I knew at first hand the peasant mind and the peasant's way of life."

The family was of "particular dimensions"; there were eleven—six boys and five girls. "Of the family," he once said, "seven members, including myself, became teachers. Why so many of us elected to choose that calling I don't know. Possibly the impulse finds expression in the words of some character in [my play] *Aftermath*: 'Harvests may be good this year and bad the next, but the Gover'nment pay is sure whatever way the wind do be blowing.'" He prepared himself for his chosen profession at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. To Cadic, his professor of French, he was indebted for his first introduction to serious dramatic literature. "One of the prescribed texts for the final examination," he once wrote, "was *Athalie*. The play touched some inner chord in my being and directly on leaving college I read with absorbed interest most of Racine's works. The thought of attempting to write a play had never entered my mind but I feel now that the appeal of Racine was an early indication of my feeling for literature as expressed in drama."

It was the short story writer and critic Daniel Corkery, at that time a fellow schoolmaster, who started him on his successful career as a dramatist. It began with a casual question: "Murray," he remarked, "you are always scribbling. We are trying to establish a Theatre. Could you not write something for us?" The immediate result was the one-act *The Wheel of Fortune*. Based on a matchmaking incident which he once witnessed at his father's store in Macroom, the play was produced in 1909 at the Dun Theatre in Cork. Later, when he started to write for the Abbey, he rewrote it as *Sovereign Love*; it is frequently revived by the Abbey players and by countless amateur groups throughout Ireland.

The struggling Abbey group was preparing a revival of Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* in the autumn of 1910 when Murray submitted to them his second play. It was the two-act tale of Munster fratricide, originally titled *The Toilers of the Soil*, but later named *Birthright*. Yeats was delighted with the new play and Lennox Robinson, who was then manager, found its construction "as perfect as a Chopin

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prelude." "T. C. Murray," he admits in his *Curtain Up*, "in a flash outdid me. . . ." *Little Eyolf* was cancelled, and after the successful opening of *Birthright*, Yeats styled Murray "our Ibsen of the South." The new play was a great success for the Abbey and the directors were gratified at the novelty of a full house every evening; ". . . for the first time, untampered with," remarks one of the Abbey's historians, "the real language of the ordinary peasant was being heard from the Abbey stage." *Birthright*, like many a Murray play, is relentless in the force of its unravelling and almost brutal in its final resolution of conflicts. The only softening influence in it is found in the character of the mother, Maura Morrissey. She displays the insight characteristic of many of Murray's women (but none of his men) and the disarming resignation to the will of God common to all of his characters. In his book on the Irish Theatre Andrew E. Malone called her "the most human of the mothers in Irish drama."

Maurice Harte followed in 1912, assuring Murray a significant place in Irish letters. In his voluminous manuscript diary now lodged in Dublin's National Library, Joseph Holloway, the architect of the Abbey and an inveterate theatre enthusiast and gossip, records the genesis of this new play originally titled *The Levite*: "Murray told me that his new play was founded on an incident of seeing real tragedy in the face of an old man who had set his heart on seeing his son a priest as he told of his son's failure to realize the old man's heart's desire nearing his ordination. The old man had spent nearly £600 on him—round the look on the old man's face he wrote his play sympathetically and delicately and without offence. Yeats made only one suggestion of changing a passage from pity to horror which Murray could not see his way to do and he told the poet so and heard nothing further about it."

Yeats and Lady Gregory were so confident of its success that they decided to put it into rehearsal while on tour and produced it early in the London season of 1912. There was scarcely an Irish dramatist who was not then turning to the themes of the rural love for the land, the passion for economic security, and youth torn between its own needs and those of its parents, but no other dramatist wove these themes into a play of such tragic impact as *Maurice Harte*. It remains one of the finest works in the Abbey repertory. Some idea of its force can be gained from the following exchange at the end of the first act among Maurice, the unwilling candidate for the priesthood, his brother Owen, and his parents who have plunged deeply into debt to defray the expenses of his years of seminary study:

MRS. HARTE. Will you be talking wild, frightening, foolish talk about your conscience, and not think at all of them, nor of us, and all we done for you?

MAURICE. (Distressfully) Mother! Mother!

MRS. HARTE. You'll go back? 'Tis only a mistake?

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MAURICE. Great God of Heaven! . . . you'll kill me.

MICHAEL. You'll go back, Maurice? The vocation will come to you in time with the help of God. It will, surely.

MAURICE. Don't ask me! Don't ask me!

OWEN. 'Twould be better for you, Maurice. 'Twould surely.

MRS. HARTE. (Passionately) If you don't, how can I ever face outside this door or lift up my head again?

MAURICE. (Piteously) Mother!

MRS. HARTE. How could I listen to the neighbours' making pity for me, and many a one o' them glad only in their hearts? How could I ever face into the town o' Macroom?

MAURICE. Oh, don't!

MRS. HARTE. I tell you, Maurice, I'd rather be lying dead a thousand times in the graveyard over at Killmamartyra—

MAURICE. (With a sudden cry) Stop, Mother, stop! . . . (There is a tense pause.) I'll—I'll go back as—as you all wish it. (He sinks into a seat with an air of hopeless dejection.)

MICHAEL. (Drawing a long, deep breath) God bless you, boy, for that! I knew you would.

OWEN. 'Tis the best thing, surely.

MRS. HARTE. (Kneeling) Oh, thanks be to the Almighty God and his Blessed Mother this day.

Neither here nor in any of Murray's plays is evil personified in a character; there are no villains. In the tradition of Athenian drama, the hero (Maurice) is torn between two duties: one to his parents, the other to his God. Conscience speaks but is silenced. Unable to contain its problem, his mind is crushed by the very force of its inner conflict and he lapses into insanity.

Unfortunately, like *Birchright*, this play was by some misunderstood. "On the production of *Maurice Harte*," Murray once wrote, "the Parish Priest and School Manager, with whom I had been on most friendly terms, turned sour. Some ill-informed person represented to him that the play was a reflection on the Irish priesthood! Things became difficult. Happily my record as a teacher was high and in 1915 I was appointed by the National Board of Education as Headmaster of the Model Schools at Inchicore in Dublin."

With his wife and five children Murray moved to Dublin that year. The Abbey was then the center of the intellectual and artistic life of the city and his gracious personality soon won him many friends among those interested in the arts, but his duties as Headmaster occupied most of his time and, being always of a retiring nature, he moved seldom in society. "My contacts with the directors of the Abbey," he once said, "were little more than casual. They were bred in the Ascendancy non-Catholic tradition and moved in a social world to which I was alien. In their company I was never at ease, for I was conscious of some barrier which my nature could not bridge." A man of gentle nature but of strong principle, Murray held out against both Yeats and George Russell (A.

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E.) when they were planning the Irish Academy of Letters and asked him to serve on the Board of Directors. Both were clamoring for the removal of the Censorship of Publications Act from the Statute Book, but Murray sought a compromise by calling for the establishment of an Appeal Board "to enable a writer to plead his cause." "To this," he once recalled, "A. E. finally assented, whereupon I became a member of the Academy."

The year after he arrived in Dublin, Murray wrote a play called first *The Underdog*, later *The Serf*. Since it concerned "school board matters and might possibly cause trouble again with school authorities," he decided to produce it under a nom de plume. When it was finally staged in 1920, public reaction justified his suspicions and, since he never acknowledged it, *The Serf* is still credited to a "Stephen Morgan." One of his many happy recollections was of the opening night at the Abbey when, during the intermission, he heard a critic remark "Imagine what Murray would have done with this plot!"

1924 brought *Autumn Fire* which is the best of Murray's three-act plays as the tenderly moving *The Briery Gap* is the best of his one-act works. Written at the same time that Eugene O'Neill was working on *Desire under the Elms*, *Autumn Fire* has by coincidence basically the same plot: the story of an elderly widower who brings into his farmhouse a young wife only to find within a year that the new bride is more attracted to her new stepson than to her husband. Murray's firm Catholic faith and O'Neill's loss of that faith may account for the varied effects of these two plays: the hopeless anguish of the O'Neill work and the pity and terror of *Autumn Fire* in which, as one critic has said, there is "only desire under the elms."

On one occasion the great Irish actress Sara Allgood asked Murray if he had her in mind when he wrote the part of Ellen in *Maurice Hart*. He replied that he was not thinking of her but that in writing all his plays he had in mind someone he knew, "a peasant woman, man etc., as the case might be." Never concerned with the drama of ideas, he sought to dramatize only the "basic human stuff," and it is not surprising that his best plays are written of that class of people whose basic humanity is least concealed by the wrappings of society. In later years he tried unsuccessfully to use an urban milieu for plays. Most of these failed, for neither character nor dialogue in them seemed to ring true.

IT IS reasonable to expect that the dramatist who has lived closest to his people will give them the most complete representation on the stage. The realization of this truth prompted Synge to take Yeats's suggestion and soak himself in the folklore of the Aran Islands and to live among the Aran fishermen. But Murray is more in touch with his rural Irishmen than Synge usually is. He has made them more subtle and more diverse than Synge, who far too often gave his only the "mighty spirit and gamey heart" that Pegeen Mike required in

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every youth, and he has searched their souls more thoroughly than Lennox Robinson or Padraic Colum. He has struck few false notes.

In *The Irish Drama* Andrew E. Malone wrote that Murray's "... deep religious feelings ... form an undercurrent in all his plays. In the Irish drama his plays are the Catholic counterpart to the essentially Protestant viewpoint expressed by Lennox Robinson. No one who either reads or sees one of Murray's plays can escape the knowledge that its author is a devout Catholic."

That this "undercurrent" puts no restriction on Murray's material may be deduced from his plots which involve murder, fornication, despair, insanity, incest and suicide; but the atmosphere in his dark world is wholly Catholic. His eager concern to portray truthfully the Catholic faith of his characters is obvious from the reasons he once gave this writer for changing the original ending of his play *The Briery Gap*: "In the original published version of *The Briery Gap*, Joan the star-crossed peasant girl, drowns herself in the nearby stream. Later I felt that a young girl bred in our Catholic tradition would shrink from facing her God with a sin of such enormity on her soul and decide to suffer like Hawthorne's unhappy woman in *The Scarlet Letter* and thus make atonement for her fall from virtue. My friends felt that the original was psychologically more convincing."

Still, Murray never softened the sting of life: Bat Morrissey, the hard, bitter, domineering father of *Birthright* is brought to see what his bitterness has led to when one of his sons kills the other; the Hartes of *Maurice Harte* see their son come home mentally deranged on the eve of his ordination, a victim of their insistence that he continue in the seminary; Owen Keegan of *Autumn Fire*, an elderly widower who has taken a young wife, is broken physically then spiritually ("as a dried *cipin* for the fire") when he sees his son and wife embrace in a scene which he tragically misinterprets. It is not a pretty Irish world that Murray painted (the world of tragedy seldom is pretty), but it is a world that can purge and elevate us as we watch passion spin the plots and progressively constrict its victims in webs of their own making.

Like most of Ireland's men of letters, Murray was saddened in recent years by the dearth of worthwhile native literature. O'Casey's *The Bishop's Bonfire* he considered "... an absurd distortion of the Irish Catholic way of life and thought." Of its author, however, his words, as ever, were kind: "... deep down in me I feel that it's largely a deliberate pose and that the real Sean O'Casey is a different personality from the portrait which emerges from his work."

When Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* and *The Hostage* won popular acclaim in London last year, he wrote "... a born exhibitionist, Behan plays up to the English concept of the typical devil-may-care Irishman." The lack of new plays at the Abbey and the unenthusiastic response of Dublin audiences to others during the 1955 season prompted him to write: "The Abbey goes its own pedes-

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trian way. . . . The few new productions haven't set the Liffey on fire. At *The Gate*, *Oedipus*—the Yeats version—drew thin audiences, and *The Lark*, Anouilh's interpretation of the St. Joan epic, won only a tepid response. It has come to this that we now turn a deaf ear to all but comic invention in our theatre."

From his home (usually referred to as "The Hermitage"), a few weeks before his death, came echoes of the same Christian resignation, the same acceptance of the *lacrimae rerum* that is heard again and again in his plays: "I am, I must confess, a little tired in body and mind. Day by day I wait for the call of the curtain on this troubled stage on which I have played so trifling a part, and look with faith and hope to its rise on a world where, with God's grace, I shall know that peace which passeth all understanding."

Murray's tales of frustration, unalleviated as they are by any playful satire or dazzling bursts of comedy, have not been so popular among us as other better-known Abbey plays. Still, his tragedies of the Catholic Irish countryside form a nice complement to the work of Synge, O'Casey, Robinson, Carroll or Behan. In many ways, he, more than they, truly put Ireland on the stage.

Delmore Schwartz: An Idea of the World

by Sister M. Hilda Bonham, I.H.M.

WRITING to Arthur Hugh Clough in 1848, Matthew Arnold maintained that the poet "must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness." If over a hundred years ago Arnold could complain that the poet of his day, working in a fragmentary culture, found the organization of experience vastly difficult because experience was very largely an individual matter, and that he was compelled to adopt some principle in terms of which he could himself impose unity on that experience or be overwhelmed by its "multitudinousness," is it any wonder that in our day, the process of fragmentation having meanwhile continued at a rapidly increasing pace, jeremiads even more forcible than Arnold's have been poured out by such writers as J. Middleton Murry, T. S. Eliot, Jacques Maritain, and Anne Morrow Lindbergh?

Such jeremiads might make us join reluctantly but inevitably the wailing wall of those who deplore the plight of the contemporary poet, were it not that even the occasional reader of the poetry of our day meets in the periodicals, the anthologies, and the slim volumes a small but substantial body of poems, the creators of which have managed in some way to escape "the world's multitudinousness" and to speak above its clamor by imposing upon their experience some kind of unity. Such a poem is "The Heavy Bear" by Delmore Schwartz.

Its subject, the relationship of the soul to the body, has tantalized thinking men for centuries: for Plato it was an imprisonment; for Aristotle (and later for St. Thomas), form imposed upon matter; and for St. Paul, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Galatians 5, 17). Literature is full of this age-old struggle, which perennially provides material for tragedy, the catastrophe occurring because the downward pull of the body has been too strong for the spirit to overcome.

The exact nature of the relation, however, is less our concern here than the hierarchy in which the soul and body take their positions. The assumption that the soul, with its rational powers that make man "a little lower than the angels," has a rightful place superior to that of the body, with its concupiscible and irascible appetites that make it prone to descend to the brute, is basic in the poem. It points out actual reversal of or deviation from this order as chaos. Moreover, it looks forward, implicitly at least, to a restoration of the right order as originally established. An analysis should illuminate the manner in which the poem suggests this, and makes us more aware of the poet's "Idea of the world."

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In "The Heavy Bear" the disorder stressed is the body's drag on the spirit, particularized in the body's clumsiness, its nearness that violates the privacy of the spirit, its cowardice, its insatiable appetite for sense pleasure, its mockery of the spirit, its vanity, its desecrating grossness. The first of the three long, unequal stanzas stresses the clumsy weight of the body; the second, its cowardly vanity; the third, the mocking grossness which trespasses upon the most sacred relationships and makes the spirit one with all those who are dominated by their appetites. Threading through all three is the constant craving for the satisfaction of the senses in such words and phrases as "honey," "candy," "the world of sugar, a sweetness intimate," "strives to be fed," and "his mouthing care." This craving seems to be presented on different age levels. The speaker in the first stanza is a young boy; in the second, an adolescent; in the third, a mature adult. The body is quite evidently in the foreground in the first two stanzas, while the spirit, though present and suffering, is ignored. In the third and longest stanza, where the expression of the theme is rounded out fully, the spirit steps forward to call attention to what the body is doing to it—"distorting," "clowning," "perplexing," "affronting," "dragging" it down

Amid the hundred million of his kind,
The scrimmage of appetite everywhere.

The poet's attitude is rather resentful, complaining. He is serious in his complaint, but the realization of the inescapability of his plight mixes with this serious half-amused, tolerant resignation. One can almost hear him saying wryly, "If this were someone else, it might be funny, but it's different when it's you." Especially at the end, there is a hint of self-mockery at his own resentment of being made part of the crowd.

MOST OF THE imagery in the poem is related directly or indirectly to its dominant image—the extended metaphor in which the body is compared to an ever-present bear. In the light of the poet's purpose the animal seems well chosen. Other writers have used other animals: Plato, the horse; St. Francis, "Brother Ass." An attempt to substitute either of these for Bruin in this poem makes it evident that the honey-loving, clumsy, bulging, easily frightened, close-hugging, brown bear was an apt choice. Moreover, the only use man has made of this species, aside from skinning bears for rugs and wraps (and then they are dead), is for amusement—third rate or lower—in zoos, and in the ancient sport of bearbaiting. Consequently no domestic associations conflict with the image.

Almost immediately in the poem we feel the immense weight of the bear's thick-furred body, "the central ton of every place," and we shy away to avoid contact with the stickiness of the "honey," which, if it smears every feature of his face, must cover his paws also. In his aimless "lumbering," he "dishevels"

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all, endangering everything fragile. The incessant hunger, no matter how numerous or sizeable the "snacks," the irrational impulse to punch anything or anybody, the excessive animal spirits—all of these, with the infatuations for "candy, anger, and sleep" that correspond to each, belong to the body of the boy in his early teens. The excess can be channelled only by "crazy factotum" antics, which range from explosions resulting from amateur experiments in chemistry to the assembling of a "super hot-rod"; by daring "human fly" feats; by the more brutal sports. Why does the poet add "in the hate-ridden city"? Perhaps he means to imply that in a rural setting this energy would be made more fruitful in the routine cultivation of the earth; that in normal contact with irrational animals, the animal part of the rational animal would be less "brutish."

Even in sleep the body weighs on the spirit. Perhaps even more, for here the subconscious and all the suppressed impulses which people it dominate the scene. As the second stanza begins, we can feel the bear's hot breath, and we flinch as he howls, first in longing for the "sweetness intimate as the water's clasp," and then in fear that material security may be withdrawn. A vain "strutting show-off," his formal dress does not hide the fact that the "quivering meat" which "bulges his pants" is terrified, not only of physical pain, but especially of the dissolution of death, when he must "finally wince to nothing at all."

In the third stanza, the spirit begins by reminding us that the "withness" of the "inescapable animal" has existed since the first moment of conception, and then goes on to delineate the effect of this on the spirit. A gesture is twisted just sufficiently in the bodily expression to convey a meaning slightly different from the one intended. The dignified figure he meant to cut is made comical. The body, no more a mirror of the spirit than the shadow of the body is its photograph, is an inadequate representation, sometimes an absurd misrepresentation ("a stupid clown") of the motives of the spirit. The body even prevents a complete knowledge of its own "secret life." It blacks out light that would penetrate to the spirit and blocks in light that the spirit would fain radiate to others. Paradoxically, the bear-hug of the body invades the spirit's privacy, and yet it remains inscrutable to the spirit's attempts to know it. The climax of the bear's insensible "brutishness" comes when it intrudes its "gross touch" into the delicate declaration of affection and degrades the sacredness of human love by refusing to let the spirit be dominant. The tender restraint of "a word would have my heart and make me clear," is violently contradicted by

Stumbles, flounders and strives to be fed,
Dragging me with him in his mouthing care,
The scrimmage of appetite everywhere.

The more one examines the word "scrimmage," the more it suggests the disorder, the grabbing, the lack of discrimination that are the dominant notes

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of unrestrained appetite. The last two lines, which include it, seem to stretch the poem out to universal proportions and underline its theme.

The very eloquence with which the poem shouts that the condition which it describes should not be is suggestive of the norm of right order which it violates: in the remote past, the norm of unfallen man, whose powers operated harmoniously without effort on his part; and in the present, the norm of disciplined man, whose powers have been trained to approach that harmony by painful effort. The self-knowledge and true sense of values revealed hint at the restoration of order by discipline, and sooner, perhaps, than the surface of the poem might indicate.

This, then, is strong witness to a more than ordinary awareness of the pattern of order in man's nature. If the duality implied by the dominant image and the rationalization of blaming the body seem to mar that pattern, let us meditate on whether the poet seriously meant to embrace these errors and value his realization that blame must be placed somewhere as at least a partial vision of true order—"an Idea of the world." By "beginning with" it, Schwartz escaped being overwhelmed by the world's "multitudinousness," because he either salvaged or embraced "some principle in terms of which he could impose unity" on experience. And this is no small comfort to those lovers of poetry who find themselves increasingly pushed toward the "wailing wall."

Hopkins' "Pied Beauty"

Once More

By Boyd A. Litzinger

THE STUDENT of Hopkins will welcome Father John Britton's "Pied Beauty' and the Glory of God" (*Renascence*, XI, 72-75) not only because it adds to our understanding of the poem but also because it discloses one more example of the pervading influence of Catholic philosophy on Hopkins—an influence too frequently slighted by critics who feel either that they are insufficiently acquainted with that philosophy to treat its presence in Hopkins or who feel that his poetry was a rebellion against the "rigidities" of his formal training and that, therefore, his poems are successful in spite of his Jesuit education.

Nevertheless, the effect of Britton's article on our appreciation of "Pied Beauty" seems to me to be essentially reductive. Although Britton carefully restricted his topic, one wishes that he had found better reasons for the poem's frequent appearance in anthologies than its ready intelligibility and its containing "enough alliteration, assonance, unusual words, and novel word-links to present a fair picture of the poet's ordinary usages and singularities." The slighting tone of this comment is not fully redeemed by the author's final compliment to Hopkins' "genius" in having written "a work that is straightforward and clear to the ordinary reader and at the same time presents to the philosophically trained student a precise statement of one of the great concepts of Thomism." Might the reader not very well infer at this point that perhaps "Pied Beauty" is not so much of an accomplishment after all—little more than the outline of a Thomistic concept, suitably sugar-coated to make it palatable to "the ordinary reader"?

"Pied Beauty" defies such an oversimplified description. It may very well have at its base a Thomistic concept—on this point Britton is convincing; but "Pied Beauty" is also much more than this fact implies. As I have tried to show elsewhere (*Explicator*, XVI, No. 1, Item 1), Hopkins' simplicity can be much more apparent than real. Of the lyrics of no other nineteenth century poet can it be more appropriately said that art lies in concealing art. With this fact in mind, and another as well—that no explication is a satisfactory "explanation" of a poet's beauty, truth, or worth—I should like to suggest that this poem is organized more skillfully and more subtly than one can infer from "Pied Beauty' and the Glory of God."

HOPKINS' "PIED BEAUTY" ONCE MORE

IN THE first place, consider that this curtal sonnet is a curious blend of English and Italian forms: the division of the poem into parts reminds us of the Italian; the interlocking quatrains (so complex as to warn us against a too simple judgment) reflect both English and Italian sonnets; the effect, though not the form, of the last two lines is that of a good concluding couplet in the English sonnet. And the thought is well suited to the form: the broad "Glory be to God for dappled things" is made specific through several examples in the first six lines; it is amplified in a new sense in the next three; and in the masterful penultimate line, it is thrown into a dazzling new perspective in an effect seldom achieved in Shakespeare's concluding couplets.

Next, consider the logical—one might justly say the psychological—progress of the poem; the arrangement of details in the opening lines of the poem prepare us thoroughly for what will follow. Although "dappled things" dominate the first six lines, these items were by no means chosen at random, if we can judge the poet's intention by his accomplishment. Consider, for example, the progression involved in lines two through four, where Hopkins leads the reader from a view of skies of "couple-colour as a brinded cow" to the pivotal "Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plow." We are not invited merely to look up at the sky and then down upon a landscape. Instead, we are given every necessary psychological preparation: looking down into the trout stream, we are expected to contemplate the dappled trout as glints of sunlight play upon the fish beneath the flashing surface of the stream. If we read with more than our eyes, we are aware of a new and sensitive dappledness—a contrast between the warmth of the rose-moles image and the cold of the stream—reinforced by "firecoal" and "falls" in the next line.

The ambiguity of line four is so nearly perfect that it can hardly have been unintentional. Its meaning hinges on our interpretation of "falls." If the poet means "autumns," we can imagine the pied beauty of chestnut trees, flaming red and black, yellow and brown; if he means the notion of falling, we may picture the richly-hued leaves fluttering from the branches, or even (an interpretation my students prefer) the dropping of roasted chestnuts, black and yellow, into the embers of a charcoal fire, shooting red and yellow sparks into the cool night air. In any case, there is a further dappledness of warmth and chill and, most important of all, we have been prepared for the flight of finch, whose colors and whose flight can be drawn as easily from the flying sparks as from the fluttering leaves.

The fifth line then falls into place so easily that we are embarrassed at not having noticed the transition at first reading. Does one move easily from "things" in line one to "landscape" in line five? Can one readily look up from a trout stream to see a landscape? Hardly. But one whose mind's eye has followed the

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finch in its flight is psychologically prepared for a bird's-eye view, a "Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plow."

And why "plow" instead of "plowed"? The exigencies of rhyme and the homely phrase "plow-land" may be adequate reasons, but the poet's art is here discernible again, for Hopkins is about to move in his praise of God from the world of "nature" to the world of "man," and line five is his transition. "Landscape" implies the influence of man, but not so strongly as the word "plow," which looks back to the pied beauty of the land but forward as well to the handiwork of a man, the smith, and thence to a new dimension of this particular beauty—"And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim." What began as praise of God through nature in its narrow sense has come to include nature in a broader frame of reference.

A HOST of minor strokes in the last few lines show the true artist at his work. For example, line nine is more than cleverly alliterative: "swift is faster than "slow"; *tastes* sour; "adazzle" is incomparably brighter than "dim." Thus the dappledness of concepts is reinforced by one of sense-impressions.

It is at this point in the poem, I feel, that the reader comes to a full realization that the poet has been creating a series of tensions, a pied-ness of contrasting colors and forms, of heat and cold, of smooth and rough ("fallow" and "plow"), of the myriad activities of man ("And all trades . . ."). One has a right to demand that these tensions be resolved, despite the poet's "who knows how?"

The resolution is accomplished in one of the most artfully disarranged sentences in Hopkins' verse. At first reading, the second part of the sonnet would appear to be a conventional periodic sentence, ruined (my freshmen maintain) by a concluding adjective clause, necessitated by a rhyme for "strange." Such a conclusion must be held suspect, for the reader with more than a passing acquaintance with Hopkins knows that a lack of rhymes was never one of the poet's weaknesses. Such a reader will look for another reason for the placement of "whose beauty is past change"—and in that reason will find the key to the poet's meaning, essentially the one which Britton assigned it. These forms of beauty the poet has been praising are pied—spotted, contrasting, counter, spare, changeable. There is in these forms an inherent tension, inherent because it is the result of the Infinite working upon the infinite. These forms reflect Him who "fathers-forth," but whose beauty is not pied, whose beauty is not fickle but past (beyond) all change, eternal and perfect. It is because this pied beauty (an all-too-imperfect reflection of perfect beauty) brings us to an awareness of that beauty "past change" that the poet can say, with a recognizable hint of the "Amen" at the end of a prayer, "Praise him."

In Memory of Elizabeth Langgässer

By Luise Rinser—Translated by John Michalski

TEN YEARS AGO, after a long and painful illness, Elizabeth Langgässer died at the age of fifty from multiple sclerosis. One could say that she had been consumed by a life which was lived intensely and which had been painfully stained, for this life ended when the development from a magic connection with nature to joy and freedom in the Holy Spirit had been completed.

We can follow this development throughout her books, for each book is a station on a steep, ascending path—a path which is indeed the Way of the Cross. Langgässer's life and work are one; none of her books is purely literary. Although far from being autobiographical, her work is nevertheless a confession, a confession in the sense of Augustine's *Confessions*. It is the manifestation of the path of salvation of a Christian soul, a soul which, although capable of being saved, is nevertheless exposed to danger. It is a soul which is finally saved through belief and grace. Her last book, one which has been frequently misunderstood, *Die Argonautenfahrt (Voyage of the Argonauts)*, is a jubilant expression of belief, belief wrought from pain, melancholy, and pessimism. It is the jubilation of a soul which has almost arrived at its destination, a soul which, like the lost son, seems lost on earth, but which is already saved and encounters the open arms of the waiting Father.

When Langgässer died, her work was in the foreground of literary interest, but its value was often questioned, sometimes very strongly. There was a group which honored Langgässer as the prophet of a new conception of the world, and which mentioned her in the same breath with Bernanos, Pegúy, and Bloy. There were others, however, who kept away from her. They particularly disapproved of her chief work, *Das unauslöschliche Siegel (The Inextinguishable Seal)*, a book in which there are no fables, in which time and place are voluntarily omitted, in which sanctity and vice are developed side by side, eclipsed by a sense of magic and mysticism. Some philosophic-theological observers have insisted that this book presents man deprived of his free will and thus lowered to the status of a puppet in either the hands of God or the claws of the Devil. Many simply labeled the book chaotic.

When I was asked in 1950 to write an article in memory of Langgässer, I did so with some reservation, for at the time her work, although obviously of great literary importance, seemed to be somewhat undisciplined. After spending

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several rather intensive weeks with her writings, however, I had little doubt that there had died a true poetess. But when I was later asked to write in memory of the tenth anniversary of her death, I was again a bit apprehensive, for there was the problem of whether or not her work had stood up during a decade characterized by an immense literary production and rapid literary and spiritual changes. I reread, somewhat nervously, *Das unauslöschliche Siegel*, and it occurred to me that this book had not only stood up during the past decade, but that we have grown to understand it better. And here I am not speaking simply of the literary form, the work of art in its own right; I am also speaking of the spiritual world represented therein—and it is this spiritual world which I will discuss in this article.

Yet, for a more complete understanding of Langgässer's works, it seems necessary to point out first the power and startling beauty of her language. Here, for example, is a passage showing an almost disquieting gift for portraying concentrated and sentient aspects of nature: "A fearless phalanx of gladioli tolerated with clattering leaves the mid-day heat. Rooted in the arid, calcareous earth were passionate, determined tulips, retrieving their feathered splendor for the sake of mere existence. Like ointment containers of the dead, which time had forgotten to exterminate, lilies began to expire with a pungent odor."

Equally striking is her portrayal of an exceedingly compact milieu: "Life in this French village appeared to have fallen into a fountain, where it remained with obstinate maliciousness and without hope for consolation."

There is, too, her portrayal of people, for which many do not give her due credit. Instead of talking of all of the man, she speaks here only about his hands: "The nails had a faded color, as if lifeless or as if the blood lacked force to fill the fingers unto their tips. They had also been cut more pointedly than one would normally expect, but the faded color and the fine form gave them a touch of pride, melancholy, and cryptic isolation."

Langgässer's language unfolds in its full beauty when she treats the religious side of life, as perhaps in the chapter where St. Theresa speaks: "Perhaps midnight has passed long since, and day is on the threshold. Yet no watchman ever calls out the hours here, and my eyes cannot penetrate through the darkness. I am, like one of these nightingales, blinded and thus dashing around more intensely. I have lost that earthly glance and find myself chanting day and night, intoxicated by love, unaware of the dimensions of time and place, where eventually my wings would have to burst."

I HAVE picked these excerpts at random, which is easily done since the book contains numerous literary gems. At times this abundance is intensified to an almost provoking and immeasurable prodigality. Yet one often wishes that the

IN MEMORY OF ELIZABETH LANGGÄSSER

poetess were a bit more discreet, although it seems we have to like it as it is, or not at all.

Langgässer's language, however, is not the result of over-concentrated efforts. It is rather the fruit of her passionate relationship to the spirit of her language, which is indeed a rarity today. To her, language is a gift received from the Holy Spirit, and every word is sacred because of its kinship to the Word, *logos*. Her love for the language, however, is simultaneously sensuous and erotic as well as religious. She is able to discern the eternal through every situation of temporal existence, and her inclination is to express this discernment in a superabundance of images, allegories, and symbols; her concept of the world and of life is, after all, one of image and allegory. The temporal aspects of life can stand for the temporal, and yet each aspect has more than merely one representation. To every temporal aspect corresponds an eternal one, and all that exists is only a simile for the *summum bonum*, God. In her existential consciousness of unity, the *communio sanctorum* of the Creator and of all that was created gives rise to what has been considered a shortcoming of hers, namely, the lack of the fable and of sharply delineated life histories. But she is not concerned with the individual; rather, she is caught up in the typical, in the notion of a soul's passage either to God or to the devil according to the way chosen—freely chosen. This she makes quite clear. It is difficult to understand, because of this clarity, how she could be accused of a heretical philosophy of determinism. When grace (which plays a very important role in her work) is bestowed upon a human being, as with the hero of *Das unauslöschlichen Siegel*, it happens suddenly as if in a heavy downpour, yet only after a lengthy and desperate longing, even though hope had already, seemingly, been given up.

How then, according to Langgässer, is man saved? The answer is simply: through blind faith. This is the most significant formula within her work. Corresponding to this formula, however, is another, one which we find clearly in *Die Argonautenfahrt*, and which has confused many readers: the pronouncement of God's ruin. This is to say, the power of evil is very great on earth, and throughout recorded history it has conquered much of what is goodness. The Devil seems, at times, more powerful than God. Yet through this formula Langgässer develops one of the most profound mysteries of Christendom with an openness which in no way makes her a heretic: the Church as an institution may fail on earth—that is, be always on the defensive, apparently impotent toward reality and the great problems of the day—while the work of the Antichrist may seem to triumph. Yet on the last day, God's significant triumph will become evident. And this is the reality which, since it is difficult to comprehend, necessitates blind faith. Reason, which either wants to prove the existence of God or His omnipotence, usually ends in disbelief. The blind believer, however, saves, through his faith, both himself and the Church as an institution.

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It is this idea, this deep knowledge of the eternal, which makes the work of Langgässer so important to us. One really has not done justice to her by placing her in an honorable and quiet niche in literary history—and that only after a few painful battles—where she is consulted occasionally by literary historians and Ph.D. candidates. It must be repeated again, as it has been before, that her work contains an immense power and importance which is still latent, because the time has not yet arrived for its appreciation. But the time will come when we need Langgässer's understanding, and so needing, we will come to understand Langgässer's work. How prophetic a picture she draws for herself in the *Unauslöschlichen Siegel* where St. Theresa speaks:

How marvelous to waste—yet how much more marvelous to be wasted away! To forget is nothing, yet to be forgotten, when the heart thought itself inscribed on plaques of stone and bronze—like the pleasure derived from a nursery tale, whose text has lost its meaning. To lose, to be lost . . . like a pebble which falls on the ground from the punctured pocket of a little boy—what an unconscious return and what obedience, which, to be sure, acts like the law of gravity, which however, like the obedience of the Mother God, can be distinguished from it. And again I say: what a peace, but dare I expect already today to partake in it?

Review-Articles:

Cardinals of the Second Spring

Three Cardinals. By E. E. Reynolds. P. J. Kenedy & Sons. \$5.50.

AMONG the most interesting developments in Victorian England were the great changes in the situation of Catholics and of the Roman Catholic Church between the beginning and the end of the Victorian Age. The Emancipation Act of 1829, granting civil rights to Catholics, was passed just three years before the conventionally accepted date for the beginning of the Age; and the deaths of Cardinal Newman in 1890 and Cardinal Manning in 1892 nearly coincided with its close. The changes that occurred between these dates were deeply implicated, sometimes paradoxically, with the other forces at work in the period. They are not some separate story, to be understood in isolation; rather, the more we see them in context, the more likely we are to understand them and to evaluate rightly their significance.

It is more than coincidence that the early, middle, and late phases of the Victorian Age as a whole were closely paralleled by the stages of the Catholic revival. In the introduction to their valuable anthology, *English Prose of the Victorian Era*, Harrold and Templeman characterize the early period, 1832-48, as "The Years of Change," beginning with the firm Reform Bill. In a similar way, the period from the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 to the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850 was a transitional period, marked by conflict between the old Catholics and the converts, and by the influx of thousands of Irish Catholics after the famines of the '40's.

The mid-Victorian phase, 1848-67, is characterized by Harrold and Templeman as "Victorian Peace, Plenty, and Doubt." These years nearly correspond to the Age of Wiseman, the fifteen years (1850-65) when Cardinal Wiseman was Archbishop of Westminster. It was a period of rapid growth, when schools and churches were built and some of the tensions between the old Catholics and the converts began to ease. On the other hand, the sharpest conflicts developed among Catholics as to the stance that was to be taken in the face of a doubting generation, so that, to recall Newman's remark in the *Apologia* ("Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt . . ."), we can say that though there was not doubt in the Catholic body, there were certainly ten thousand difficulties, disagreements, and misunderstandings on issues of philosophy, politics, and education.

Finally, what Harrold and Templeman call the period of "Fulfillment and Decline: 1867 to 1901" corresponds to the Age of Manning, the period from 1865 to 1892 when Manning was Archbishop. It was a period in which Catholics gradually threw off the "siege mentality" to enter more actively into the life of the nation. Manning's mediation in the London Dock Strike and Newman's returning to Oxford to receive an honorary degree dramatize the enormous change that occurred between the beginning and the end of the Age.

Each of these phases had its peculiar necessities, its tensions to be somehow resolved, and each required men of different gifts. How far, and in what way, these necessities were met by three great churchmen of very different gifts,

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Wiseman, Manning, and Newman, is the theme of *Three Cardinals*. In bringing their careers within the compass of a single study, E. E. Reynolds has necessarily been forced to simplify and to compress, yet the opportunity he offers the reader to take some unified view and to assess the differences of mind and temper among the three is a challenging one. The value of the book is, in fact, largely in its suggestiveness. For a more complete portrait of any one of the three as personalities, or for a full account of the issues that engaged their energies, we need to go to the sources that Reynolds himself used, as well as to a few he seems not to have used or been aware of. Yet he has juxtaposed the careers of the three Cardinals in a fashion that opens many fresh perspectives. Even the quarrels and misunderstandings in which all three became involved, which often give us a sense of tragic waste of energies and talents, serve to emphasize their willingness to run the risks of commitment and debate. While their careers need first of all to be viewed in the context of the age, many of the issues they had to deal with are still very much with us.

One very urgent problem of the age was that of higher education for priests and laymen. What had not been realized before is that not Newman alone, but all three churchmen were involved in projects for the founding of Catholic universities or colleges: Wiseman at Prior Park; Newman, of course, at Dublin; and Manning at Kensington.

Wiseman had become vice-rector of the English College in Rome in 1827, the very years when the publication of his *Horae Syriacae* had established him as a man of great scholarly promise, and the next year he had become rector. While occupying this influential position he had received many visitors from England, among them Newman and Hurrell Froude, Manning, Macaulay, and Gladstone. During these years the future of the Catholic Church in England was continually in his thoughts, and as Reynolds says, both he and his vice-rector George Errington saw that "the urgent need was the training of zealous and educated priests." In 1840 he assumed the presidency of Oscott College in England, but several years earlier he was involved in a premature plan to found a Catholic University. As early as 1829 Bishop Baines had bought Prior Park, Bath, proposing to use it as "a school, a seminary, and, ultimately, as a Catholic university." In 1834 he discussed his plan with Wiseman, who wrote in August, 1834, to Archbishop Whitfield of Baltimore: "I go to England in Spring to undertake the establishment of a new Catholic University under the sanction of His Holiness. . . ." Once Wiseman was in England, however, he found Bishop Baines no longer enthusiastic. As Reynolds puts it, "the bishop seems to have resented Wiseman's advice on the conduct of the college." In the light of Wiseman's inability even to make a start toward founding a Catholic university, we can see Newman's work a few years later in Dublin as a signal success.

Probably because the story of Newman's founding of the Catholic University at Dublin is so familiar, Reynolds devotes relatively little space to it. He does call attention to something perhaps more directly pertinent to the English scene, namely Newman's two attempts to establish a branch of the Oratory near Oxford University, both of which were frustrated. The same division of opinion among the hierarchy as to what should be done for the higher education of the Catholic laity was present in Ireland and in England, and as is well known, on these

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issues Manning and Newman held widely different views. In 1895 Pope Leo XIII granted permission for Catholics to attend the English universities, but before this Manning was involved in an attempt to found a Catholic University in England. The Catholic University College was established in Kensington in 1874 and abandoned in 1882. In Reynolds' words:

Manning had taken the whole matter into his own hands. He did not consult Newman, nor the Jesuits with their long tradition of educational work. A well qualified staff was collected and they did good work, but the ractor was incompetent and mismanaged the finances. Eventually Manning had to wind up this ill-conceived experiment. Yet, with better organization, less rigidity of control and wider use of lay interest, it might have succeeded.

While these attempts to establish Catholic institutions of higher learning were not entirely concerned with the education of laymen, it was over the provision of educational opportunity for the laity that most of the disagreements developed. In fact, the conflict over the whole role of the laity both in the Church and in civic life runs through the entire period, and has implications and overtones that Catholics in America cannot help reflecting on. At the outset of the period, the descendants of the old Catholic families are content with mere sufferance, thankful merely to be left alone. They cannot even conceive of active participation in the life of the nation. It is understandable, given the historical circumstances, that in 1830 Bishop Bramston, Vicar-Apostolic of the London District, should warn his flock "to avoid the dangers to their faith which might be involved in close association with the public life of a Protestant country." But even if the siege mentality gradually lost its rigidity, it remained to be reckoned with throughout the Victorian Age—and, perhaps, even beyond.

Later in the century, as a more enlightened and more forward-looking laity slowly emerged, we find the clergy sharply divided in their attitude toward them. Nowhere was Newman's imaginative grasp, what I would call his statesmanlike grasp of human realities, his capacity to enter into the minds of others, better shown than in his championing of the laity during these years. Nothing galled him more than to see mature educated laymen treated as "little boys," to use his own phrase, and kept in leading strings. It is not too much to say that most of his difficulties and many of his disappointments as a Catholic priest resulted from his effort not only to aid the formation of an enlightened and responsible laity, but to provide a wider scope for the exercise of intelligence and of a sense of responsibility where these qualities already existed. Though Reynolds does not develop this point, we know that while Rector at Dublin, Newman tried, against opposition, to give laymen a substantive role in the administration of the university. And his Oratory School, founded in May, 1859, was, as Reynolds tells us, "conducted on the lines of the English Public Schools." "The masters were laymen and they brought to the school the benefits of their Oxford and Cambridge days."

The title of Reynolds' book can be somewhat misleading. We note that Wiseman was the only one of the three who was not a convert, and that he became not only a Cardinal, but Archbishop of Westminster, in 1850, at the age of 42. Newman was still an Anglican at that age. Manning entered the Catholic Church in 1851, became Archbishop 14 years later at age 57, and a

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Cardinal in 1875. Newman, however, was never an Archbishop and was not made a Cardinal until 1879, when he was 78 years old. In other words, considering their places in the hierarchy of the Church during their most active years, one might more accurately, if more awkwardly, entitle the book *A Cardinal Archbishop, an Archbishop, and a Priest*.

Organizing the book into some kind of unity must have been difficult, and it is no wonder if one finds it somewhat awkward at times. Reynolds begins with ten chapters that alternately consider the early careers of the three men, then gives us fifteen chapters with such titles as "Oblates of St. Charles," "The Catholic University," and "The Vatican Council," thus recording "the development of each of the three beside the other two" and sketching their personal characteristics in the process. Though he does not give the sources of his numerous quotations, one is soon aware that he is relying chiefly on the standard works: Bishop Bernard Ward's *The Sequel to Catholic Emancipation*, Abbot Butler's *Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne*, and, for the lives of the three Cardinals, Wilfrid Ward's *Newman* and his *Wiseman*, and Purcell's *Manning*, the latter "supplemented and, in part, corrected, by Shane Leslie's *Henry Edward Manning*." Even though the book is obviously meant for the general reader rather than for the scholar in the field, there are times when the undocumented quotations can be misleading. For example, when on page 54 Reynolds writes: "In later life Gladstone recalled a return visit Wiseman made to his room," we expect the quote that followed to be from Gladstone. Actually it turns out to be from Ward's *Wiseman*, I, 277. More serious are errors in dates. On page 104, for "1856" we should read "1846"; on page 129, in two places, for "1846" we should read "1856"; and on page 208, for "1887" we should read "1867."

In his concluding chapter Reynolds makes a just estimate of the different contributions made by the three churchmen to English Catholic life and to the world. It was Wiseman's mission "to lead the Catholic Church in England out of the twilight that followed the long years of proscription into the light of day and to take its place not only in the national life but in the wider life of the Church in the world." Manning, a man of will power and determination, yet lacking the "intellectual distinction" and the "imaginative genius" of Wiseman and Newman, shows his ability in managing the "practical affairs of the Church" and in his great crusade for social justice. His fear of Newman's influence, and what Reynolds calls the "unworthy means" he allowed himself for checking this influence, make up a less favorable aspect of his career. (On this Reynolds is somewhat more measured than he needs to be. I could have wished for some of the indignation that Father Louis Bouyer shows in his recent *Newman: His Life and Spirituality*.) Finally, he sees Newman as "a profound thinker with the susceptibilities of a poet," a man "unable to treat any subject without going down to fundamental principles which are as relevant today as during his lifetime."

If here and there this study shows the marks of imperfect assimilation of materials into a new and convincing unity, it can still be recommended as a responsible, judicious, and illuminating attempt, within the compass of a single volume, to survey the activities and evaluate the personalities of three great churchmen.

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REVIEW-ARTICLE

Hope vs. Despair in the New Gothic Novel

The Violent Bear It Away. By Flannery O'Connor. Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy. \$3.75.

THE PROMOTION of *The Violent Bear It Away*, Flannery O'Connor's second novel, plus the recent promotion of her career indicate that she is being groomed as A Current Great Writer. Her name has become a handy filler to the literary-notes-from-all-over commentators; she did an essay for Granville Hick's recent *Symposium On The Novel*; and she is one of the two writers under fifty to receive a Ford grant for young writers. In short, she has succeeded. Where she has succeeded and how raise several questions in both literature and public relations.

At an increasing rate since World War II judgment has dwindled in literary criticism, academic and non-academic, and prestige in letters has come proportionately to rest on personality. As with Hollywood figures, we now learn about the writer, and by inference his writing, through his public image. Flannery O'Connor, we are informed, is Catholic, lives in Milledgeville, Georgia, paints, and raises peacocks. In young Hemingway's day the informed reader distinguished between the public relations image Hemingway projected, replete with Charles Atlas musculature, and the man's prose. Though the undergraduate might have confused drinking with a Hemingwayish stoicism, his superiors generally did not. Profound or foolish, they judged; they evaluated the Hemingway product as an attempt to comment on or describe or represent an age, a generation, a *zeitgeist*.

Today such an attempt is rare. The modern approach to letters tends to be fussy, esoteric, concerned either for textual or semantic puzzles; often the academic critic is merely building a bibliography item rather than even attempting to evaluate. The run-of-the-mill non-academic critic is little better since most are writers themselves and are afraid of rousing spite through a negative remark about a contemporary. With the rare exception of such men as J. Donald Adams of the *New York Times* or Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., of *America*, both of whose critical principles are set forth plainly, most "critics" shrewdly avoid a statement of policy. Thus "criticism" increasingly tends to reflect snobberies and cliquishness in place of principle. Cogency is sufficiently rare as to allow a major literary journal to promulgate the canard that the only alternatives open as serious archetypes to the American novelist lie in the ex-radical, the cosmopolitan Jew, or the Southern homosexual. Such a straight-faced comment would be amusing if it were not seized upon seriously enough to be redacted in various other journals until it had become a minor cliché in the canon of a certain sect of The New Criticism.

Such wild surmise as this raises a dense fog between the critic and Flannery O'Connor. Must we acknowledge that she is writing literature *simply* because her stories are negative—along with Nabokov's and Below's and Kerouac's? Should we—as indeed we have with Truman Capote and James Jones—accept the avowal of her serious intention as adequate justification for her work? Must we accept her work as "Catholic" because she is "Catholic"? Shall we do as others do: tally her Guggenheims and Ford grants and reach an actuarial measure of her success? Lastly, is it not time that we questioned the work and

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some of these clichés? Must not the critic insist that a work pretending toward literature demonstrate some pertinence to life? Must he not somehow get at the organizing principle in the work?

The factor most commonly assigned Flannery O'Connor is religious profundity. Caroline Gordon has described her vision as "Blakean" and sees in it "Blake's explosive honesty." The tag requires a decision as to what sort of Gothic we have in O'Connor's grotesqueries. If the figures are delineated by the pure, organic vitality of Blake's "bounding line," well and good. If the narratives are Gothic in the convention of *The Castle Of Otranto*, we have a different matter and can hardly liken it to Blake.

In Miss O'Connor's earlier work the Blakean vision was lacking. The minor images of her first novel, *Wise Blood*, far from expressing minor analogies to support the major analogy of the book's dramatic form—as the mediaeval Gothic does—were quirkish and often bungled. An example from the first page of *Wise Blood* will suffice: "She was a fat woman with pear-shaped legs that slanted off the train seat and didn't reach the floor." Here *pear-shaped* is the snappy imagery of Ray Bradbury; the ridiculous contrast of legs to pears provides burlesque rather than the painful meditation invoked by such as Blake's "marriage hearse . . . youthful harlot's curse" rimed figures. The failure of language similar to the phrase *pear-shaped* is even more apparent when we note that the character described drops from the book soon thereafter and does not return. Her sole function was as a peg for the display of such virtuosity. In *Wise Blood*, then, as well as in many of Miss O'Connor's stories, we find a language that draws attention to itself rather than to its subject.

The prose of the first novel was that of a professional but not an artist, of Truman Capote but certainly not William Blake. From time to time a passage did break through to serve a more literary purpose, as in the terrible conclusion of *Wise Blood*, in which Hazel Motes is beaten to death in a ditch, the universal end, as it were, in this world. In that passage the starkness of language matches a proper callosity of tone. The passage, however, does not represent the entire work.

The Violent Bear It Away, on the other hand, contains little irresponsible imagery. Odd as it may appear that a writer should establish in a novel and a book of short stories a distinct style and then establish in a second novel a different style, that appears to be the case here. Perhaps it is not so odd at that since Miss O'Connor's scope is so narrow that this novel may be said to be no more than a redaction of her earlier work. The first chapter was previously published as a long story and stood well alone.

The following typical passage will demonstrate the architectonic validity of the prose that makes up *The Violent Bear It Away*. The passage deals with the hero, Tarwater, listening to an idiot boy answer a telephone. The idiot does not speak, and Tarwater stands perplexed, unable momentarily to reckon what it is that he hears. The organic quality of the detail lies in the fact that later Tarwater is to drown the idiot, thus the relevance of "struggling to breathe in water." Also, Tarwater has been ordered by his prophetic great-uncle to begin his own prophetic career by baptizing the idiot, a task he intends to avoid. He has, in a sense, tried not to believe in the idiot; thus the "revelation" of the passage and the sense of being "stunned by some deep internal blow."

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The heavy breathing began again as if in answer. It was a kind of bubbling noise, the kind of noise someone would make who was struggling to breathe in water. In a second it faded away. The horn of the machine dropped out of Tarwater's hand. He stood there blankly as if he had received a revelation he could not yet decipher. He seemed to have been stunned by some deep internal blow that had not yet made its way to the surface of his mind.

This language is rich, detailed, and clear. Often the prose in this novel demonstrates a boldness, a disdain for what is occasionally an affected clinical accuracy in a Naturalistic novelist. For example, when Tarwater drowns the idiot, nothing suggests that the death be taken as a matter of criminal law. The narrative does not concern itself with law, and thus Miss O'Connor intrudes the gimmickry of Dragnet no more than Poe does in "The Fall of the House of Usher."

The narrative is simple. A fourteen-year-old boy, Tarwater, lives in an isolated Southern clearing with his very old prophet great-uncle. The old man has raised Tarwater to be a prophet, leaving him two commands: that Tarwater bury the old man properly beneath a cross, and that Tarwater begin his own prophetic career by baptizing the idiot son of his one other blood kinsman, a would-be-atheistic schoolteacher named Rayber. The story opens with the old man's death and Tarwater's refusal to bury the corpse. The bulk of the book deals with Tarwater's attempt not to baptize the idiot and Rayber's attempt to cure Tarwater of his religious delusion. The essential difference between these two is in Tarwater's faith that he has the ability to act. This ability, he believes, makes him capable not only of willing but of creating significance in life through intentional action.

The thought which the book carries through Tarwater and his uncle is hardly profound in the main. We have at some length the cliché of how on the Day of Judgment God can separate the risen from the worms that ate them. The idea that the old man, Tarwater's great-uncle, prophesizes because "wanting a call, he called himself" is elaborated through the schoolteacher. The dramatic movement of scenes is often powerful in its grotesqueness, but the thought seldom rises above the level offered here.

The particular kind of natural law that governs the world of this novel is stark, dark, and distinctly deterministic. In fair comment, *The Violent Bear It Away* presents a vision more grim than that of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." In spite of himself, Tarwater does baptize the idiot and so is driven to his prophetic task. He does not choose. He is also forced to acknowledge that in meaningful actions his will does not function to serve his ends, being negated either by a failure of intellect—acting on the wrong object—or an inability to control his actions at the critical moment of applying the intention he wished. Probably the most telling single event is that in which he drowns the idiot only to hear the words of baptism "coming out of himself" without his volition. Clearly his will is not his own. His consciousness serves only to provide awareness of suffering. Nor is the suffering a Russian Orthodox, Dostoevsky-like purgation which will lead eventually to a higher state.

The narrative offers a world of near total desolation and anguish. Instead of a rejection, we see the acceptance of a physical world much like that depicted in Grünewald's *Crucifixion*, but we are also asked to accept an "Other World"

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equally terrible. The prophet is not saved to redemption; he is saved to damnation. The terms, of course, negate each other. Tarwater, we are told, "knew, with a certainty sunk in despair, that he was . . . called to be a prophet." And as a prophet he sees "himself trudging into the distance in the bleeding stinking shadow of Jesus, until at last he received his award, a broken fish, a multiplied loaf. The Lord out of dust had created him, had made him blood and nerve and mind, had made him to bleed and weep and think, and set him in a world of loss and fire. . ."

The foregoing citation is not set in any Jamesean irony to indicate a tragicomic misreading of Tarwater's fate on his part. In the world of *The Violent Bear It Away* this vision is a true one. A question of taste intrudes here in that the misreading of the loaves and fishes detracts from what must be intended as high seriousness. However, the alternative to the vision is more significant. Rayber, the evangelical atheist, offers as an alternative a "world where there's no saviour but yourself. . . The great dignity of man," [Rayber] said, "is his ability to say: I am born once and no more. What I can and do for myself and my fellowman in this life is all of my portion and I'm content with it. It's enough to be a man." Barren or not, such rationalism is dignified, and if it allows no Other World, man is free to enjoy this one.

However, the novel makes clear through various prophecies by Tarwater and other prophets that Rayber's rational alternative is no more than a silly delusion. In the world of this novel the characters move in an absolutely relentless deterministic pattern. Although at moments peculiar dramatic devices intrude to raise vague issues, nothing seems to relieve the underlying determinism of the narrative.

It is because of this obvious determinism that this reviewer mentioned earlier the social notes aspect of current literary criticism. After even a casual perusal of *The Violent Bear It Away*, the only reason one might refer to Flannery O'Connor as a "Catholic" author is a personal one. Since this novel has been widely spoken of as "Catholic," it seems imperative that one point out that like so much current negative writing, this book is not Catholic at all in any doctrinal sense. Neither its content nor its significance is Catholic. Beyond not being Catholic, the novel is distinctly anti-Catholic in being a thorough, point-by-point dramatic argument against Free Will, Redemption, and Divine Justice, among other aspects of Catholic thought.

Though the novel assumes a dramatic structure by pursuing the development of Tarwater's fate, a good deal of the stage paraphernalia is Southern Gothic. That is, to some degree the book makes sense, but the total negativism of its statement added to its Gothic stage mechanisms qualifies it as perhaps High or Academic Gothic as distinguished from the Gothic as found in *The Castle of Otranto* or James Purdy's *The Color of Darkness*. Telepathy is fairly common in the novel, and we have a Hell-fire, prophetic, crippled, little girl preacher with a voice "like a glass bell." There is a homosexual debauchment, a corpse sitting at a breakfast table; a sex delinquent's child is born in an auto wreck. "And," as The Cat in the Hat would say, "that is not all." Much of the violence, such as the drowning of the idiot, tends toward the Gothic in being staged without regard for the mundane details of police procedure or other trivia so that the reader is overcome by terror. If this were the only such detail, since it is structurally unified, we might say that its handling showed a Classical stark-

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ness akin to that of Kafka or Poe. But though we may justify the drowning so, we cannot defend every scene of violence with an organic unity argument.

The most thoroughgoing Southern Gothic detail falls late in the book. Tarwater is drugged and assaulted by a "pale, lean, old-looking young man with deep hollows under his cheekbones." The rape is vague, as is common in the Southern Gothic, and about all that it does contribute is more anguish as if to suggest that one should suffer every violation even to being raped by a homosexual. The assault is not enriched any by the fact that it is stuck into the text rather anticlimactically and is perpetrated by a total stranger who picks up Tarwater as the latter is hitch-hiking. A question of taste rises here, as often in the novel. Apparently the homosexual is a divine agent sent to impose a sign on Tarwater. At almost any turn in the narrative a slight probing will produce similar questions and implied intentions. Yet if the book as a whole is intended as religious, one wonders how deeply this intention goes.

Beyond the religious question, a book as negative as this raises a question about its insight into current American culture. Such books appear to be praised for two reasons: first, because they feed some partisan need in certain would-be critics who wish to see any positive faith attacked; second, they are merely a new form of the Gothic novel, which is to say that they sell well on the popular market. They are thriller books for intellectuals just as, say, works like Boswell's *London Journals* are, more often than not, erotica for professors. Where Walpole used spooks in his Gothic form, the neo-Gothic novelist uses sex aberration; where Walpole thrilled his readers with forbidden violence, the current writer adds insanity, blasphemy, and/or sedition. Thus we see the link between the Southern Gothic with its homosexuality and the Northern aberrational tale such as Nabokov's *Lolita*; both are negative, both thrilling, and both are said to be compassionate and profound, no doubt because of their passion-charged trapplings and confusion.

It is impossible to avoid pointing out that The New Critical concern for method has so removed intent or principle from "critical" concern that books of almost no significance as literature are now analyzed calmly and thoroughly as serious literary efforts. Wilson's *The Outsider*, which hoaxed the British-American critical world, academic and non-academic, is but a sample. Apparently Flannery O'Connor is another. Whether or not she is pulling her own leg is not the place of a reviewer to say, but it is certain that she has tried to pull the legs of many others and with frequent success.

Writing in *The Saturday Review* about the "poor erring men" in Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*, Granville Hicks says: "She writes about them with great compassion, and does justice to their virtue." The remark is typical of hundreds about not only O'Connor but Salinger and Capote and Nabokov and Bellow and all that school of writers who can tear down but not build up, who will not tolerate faith or hope. The critical fallacy which Granville Hicks raises here, and which is a standard flaw in the criticism of his literary peers, is that neither compassion nor virtue can validly occur in a world in which there is no responsibility. Without the free choice that defines responsibility no virtue can be assigned; and though both characters and author may feel strongly, their feelings remain sentimentality in such a world because they concern not failures of hope but mere facts and thus philosophically should be accepted rather than lamented. Surely this is not an objection to pain. After all,

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Saint Sebastian suffers in the flesh, but his suffering has meaning. He does not *merely* hurt as a beast hurts, and the reader is not asked *merely* to gush over his suffering.

The basic element lacking in the kind of novel that *The Violent Bear It Away* represents is redemption. Always we find in these horrors that there is no hope because the people in the books are already damned and in torment. There can be neither compassion nor virtue in such a world because either depends by definition on redemption. Beyond the sentimentality of such books, though, and beyond their questionable taste, as novels they are subversive of literature itself; for, by its nature, literature is a statement of faith and of hope. When despair becomes its statement, the art has ended. Perhaps even more than that has ended, for where hope cannot exist in art, it has already failed in life. Ultimately, if we weigh *The Violent Bear It Away* seriously, we are forced to conclude that its truth is that there is no hope in this world or in the next. I offer, then, as a considered statement, that Flannery O'Connor in this novel is an enemy of literature and of life, for the book is a pointless bit of comic book sentimentality.

University of Santa Clara

Robert O. Bowen

Book Reviews:

The Clinical Approach

Reflections on the Human Venture. By Hadley Cantril and Charles H. Bumstead. New York University Press. \$6.50.

IN AN AGE when psychology has developed within a tradition of alliance with or at least strong inclination toward science, it is refreshing to read a book in which two psychologists advance the theory that psychological truths can be profitably complemented by the truths of literature. Indeed, Cantril and Bumstead seem so firmly convinced of the veracity of this approach that they have included in their book excerpts from or complete reproductions of such literary works as Emerson's "Each and All," Auden's "New Year Letter" and Thurber's "Many Moons" to illustrate how literary artists express their visions of the relationships of man to the external world, man and his assumptions, man and his choices, man and his fellow man and, finally, man and God.

At the moment it seems that this book would be of more interest to psychologists than to students of literature. The terminology is somewhat specialized, and the literary conclusions arrived at do not seem far different from those advanced by Matthew Arnold in "Science and Literature," although Arnold in that essay was regarding literature from a different vantage point. At times one cannot help thinking the approach to certain problems too clinical.

In the chapter entitled "Man's Strivings: Change Within Order," in which the authors demonstrate discursively and through literary examples like E. B. White's "*Quo Vadimus?*" that man cares more for the process of attaining goals than for the goals themselves, one may sense more verbosity than wisdom. In considering the problem of man's instinct to preserve his identity, the authors permit themselves to say that "living things strive to maintain their organization or their form in the face of internal and external disruptive agencies." This seems to exceed the prescriptive diction of the professional psychologist and come quite close to circumlocution.

Despite some reservations that might be made about the book's idiom, its chief merit seems to be its inclination toward the *connaissance poétique* of literature while still not disallowing the benefits of science in psychology. In this regard, the book may be the beginning of a counterbalance to those schools of psychology that are inflexibly scientific in their orientation.

Duquesne University

Samuel Hazo

Friends and Letters

Stephen Crane: Letters. Edited by R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes. New York University Press. \$6.50.

NO AMERICAN author confounds his biographer with so many incertitudes and debatable issues and gaps in his chronology as Crane," complains Professor Stallman in his Introduction to the *Letters*. "A new biography is

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needed." Until that much-needed work appears, this volume will serve as the most carefully documented study that has yet been published on the short life of Stephen Crane. For this is considerably more than a collection of letters. It is a meticulously detailed synthesis of Crane's personal life and literary career, bringing together several new insights and correcting not a few errors made by Beer and Berryman, neither of whose biographies has been altogether ideal from the scholar's standpoint.

The collection is divided into five sections, arranged chronologically according to Crane's life from 1871 to 1900, followed by a somewhat lengthy appendix in which are printed reminiscences by Crane's friends. Among these last is what the editors claim "a notable Conrad find," a letter to Peter F. Somerville which contains the pessimistic assertion that "Mere literary excellence won't save a man's memory," and an even more skeptical comment upon Crane's reputation: "Believe me my dear Sir no paper, no review, would look at anything that I or anybody else could write about Crane. . . . In fifty years' time some curious literary critic (of the professional scribbler kind) will perhaps rediscover him as a curiosity and write a short paper in order to earn five guineas." Fortunately for us, Conrad underestimated the literary curiosity of modern scholars.

In all, the *Letters* include 398 items, 184 of which are published here for the first time. It is difficult to agree with Professor Stallman that "a new perspective emerges" from this collection; these letters merely confirm the already established notion that Stephen Crane's personality was one of many contradictions—that he could gallantly defend a poor girl from the charge of street-walking and live with a woman without the moral sanction of marriage while at the same time be prudish about women who smoked cigarettes; that he could assert that "environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless" and yet claim that the poverty and degradation of the bowery were results of cowardice; that he could be foolishly generous with casual acquaintances yet a hardheaded bargainer with literary agents and publishers; in short, that if he "was often the gentleman, he was also often the conceited and irresponsible heel."

What does emerge clearly from this volume is the portrait of a hectic, tragic life confronted with "desperate resolution." Curiously enough, most of Crane's sincerest statements about his personal philosophy and his literary creed were made in letters to women he knew only superficially. For example, in one of his characteristically revealing notes to Lily Brandon Munroe, he wrote: "My career has been more of a battle than a journey. . . . I am doomed, I suppose, to a lonely existence of futile dreams. It has made me better, it has widened my comprehension of people and my sympathy with whatever they endure." Later, writing to Nellie Crouse, he confessed, "There is not even much hope in my attitude. I do not even expect to do good. But I expect to make a sincere, desperate, lonely battle to remain true to my conception of my life and the way it should be lived." At the same time (January, 1896) he wrote to John Phillips the following prophecy:

I am minded to die in my thirty-fifth year. I think that is all I care to stand. I don't like to make wise remarks on the aspect of life but I will say that it doesn't strike me as particularly worth the trouble. The

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final wall of the wise man's thought however is Human Kindness of course. If the road of disappointment, grief, pessimism, is followed far enough, it will arrive there. Pessimism itself is only a little, little way, and moreover it is ridiculously cheap. The cynical mind is an uneducated thing. Therefore do I strive to be as kind and as just as [I] may be to those about me and in my meagre success at it, I find the solitary pleasure of life.

That Crane's "road," though shorter by five years, was no less difficult than he anticipated, is shown in his own last letters and in those of Cora Taylor Crane—a series of frantic pleas for money, addressed to his literary agent, James B. Pinker. Despite these difficulties, and despite his desertion of orthodox Christianity, the letters reveal that Crane never abandoned the principles on which his ancestral religion was founded. Like Private Henry Fleming, he emerged from his ordeal with a genuine courage and compassion.

Centenary College of Louisiana

Earle G. Labor

A Long Gallery

The Real Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Critical Essays by Francis Thompson. Ed. by Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S.J. University Publishers, 409 pp., \$10.50.

THE Curator of the Francis Thompson Collection at Boston College, Reverend Terence L. Connolly, S.J., is like the Biblical householder "who brings forth from his storeroom new things and old." Fr. Connolly's storeroom contains not only a rich collection of original manuscripts that are known to be Thompson's and have been published in his lifetime under his name; it also contains a wealth of Thompson material hitherto unpublished or originally published anonymously or under a pseudonym in periodicals of the poet's day. These latter items in the Boston College Collection are old in one sense, but new in an even truer sense because the present-day public is unfamiliar with them. To correct this condition, Fr. Connolly has busied himself for many years in searching out, identifying and publishing such material, so that others may share the treasures in his custody.

The first volume of previously uncollected Thompson writings was published by Fr. Connolly in 1948 under the title of *Literary Criticisms*. A few years later came *The Man Has Wings*, a collection of poems and plays. The latest addition to this growing body of Thompson literature is a substantial prose collection, *The Real Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Critical Essays*. Published recently by University Publishers, the book has already received plaudits from many sources, including the discriminating *Atlantic Monthly*.

Like the two previous volumes, *The Real Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Critical Essays* is not only a book for the student of literature, but for anyone who enjoys the mental and emotional adventures which a good writer offers his readers. The contents are chiefly reviews or critiques of books that cover an extraordinary range of subject matter, biographical and literary. Besides being informative, Thompson's reviews of these works are eminently readable and

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provide the reader with the opportunity of sharing the fruits of the poet-critic's wide reading, his insight, and his mature judgment of man and literature. Above all, they afford intimate contact with Thompson the man—one who never lost his youthful generosity of spirit, nor his delight in beauty and goodness wherever it might be found.

The essays in the volume have been grouped in various categories, beginning with a series of reviews of various biographical works. The subjects comprise a motley gallery of notables—literary figures such as Stevenson, Patmore, Goldsmith, Carlyle, Burns, and Dorothy Wordsworth; political personalities such as Napoleon and Marysiencka—errant spouse of the Polish King John III (Sobieski); and some widely divergent religious characters such as Pauline Marie Jaricot who founded the Propagation of the Faith, Saints Catherine of Siena and Catherine De Ricci, and John Wesley, father of Methodism. This biographical portion of the book is followed by substantial sections on 17th century and Victorian writers, with slighter sections devoted to American and Irish literary figures, including Mangan and Yeats. Many essays, too disparate in subject matter to be categorized otherwise, are gathered together in a "Varia" section, and the book is climaxed with a collection of thirteen original manuscripts of Thompson published for the first time.

This is a wide panorama—a sort of Cook's tour of literature—but with Thompson as guide the way is easy and entertaining. He is full of information about the subjects he discusses, and his lively pen brings to life both the personalities of literary figures and the works that reflected them. We catch these qualities in the opening essay—a review of an edition of Stevenson's letters. The essay begins:

"'Well, I did my damndest anyway.' This sentence, from his own pen, might stand as Stevenson's epitaph. If ever a man did his best, he did. He put his best into his books, he gave of his best to his friends."

Through liberal quotation, interspersed with interpretative or informative comment, Thompson traces "the real Stevenson as we see him, who lurked clear-eyed beneath the kaleidoscopic flashings of his frolic moods." And at the end he sums up this deservedly beloved writer and man with justice, compassion and admiration. From one of Stevenson's letters he quotes a lengthy passage which begins: "If I could believe in the immortality business, the world would indeed be too good to be true; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire. . . ." The words with which Thompson introduces this passage are as revealing of him as the quotation is revealing of Stevenson:

In the history of our literature we have had brilliant and versatile minds—minds that ran while others walked—touched to such issues of fancy, folly and fun, that they had the power to thrill their hearers or readers as they listed. We have also had grave and serious minds, ever conscious of the profound intention that underlies material things, while refusing to be harnessed to any creed of man's making. In Stevenson was welded these two natures. Therein lies his strength and influence. He did, to the utmost of his ability, the work to which he had been called, and he never lost sight of the Eternal Verities. His view of them was not orthodox. It was his own, purchased at his own cost.

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The same honesty and appreciation informs Thompson's comments on a totally different sort of man—one who by his own admission had little affinity for art—John Wesley, founder of Methodism. Thompson sees Wesley as a personification of John Bull—"plain, solid, narrowly rational. . . . His comments on books and men are essentially mediocre and conformed to his strong contracted personal prejudices." Yet he observes that Wesley's personal conviction and magnetism made him an excellent street preacher: "A preacher to the English needs no emotionality. One remembers that Newman had no passion or graces of delivery; yet his silver monotony thrilled men's souls. And this Newman of the plebs and the marketplace haled men's hearts out of them." He comments admiringly on Wesley's courage and his labors among the poor, and he concludes: "He went where none had cared or dared to go, he re-established religion among whole populations living like beasts, and his deserved reward was the spread of Methodism from end to end of England."

Thompson is as catholic in his approach to literature as in his estimate of men. He approves artistry wherever it is found, even where he has no sympathy with the philosophy that it serves. Similarly, he welcomes individuality of style. "Let us be only too thankful if we have many poets with diverse gifts," he says in protest against critics who would have made the admirable directness of A. E. Housman a norm for all poets. His critique of Housman's "A Shropshire Lad" is especially characteristic of this capacity for balanced judgment, for it is hard to conceive two poets so disparate in style, philosophy, and theme as were Thompson and Housman. He is not deceived by the bucolic flavor of Housman, as were some of his fellow critics. He notes that the poignant effect of many of Housman's lyrics proceeds from "the contrast between his happy country youth and the grim realities of his adult city life." But he points out the grim pessimism of the philosophy which underlies this mood: "Clearly, nothing can be more misleading than to regard this poet as a specimen of the healthy, life-enjoying country bard. . . . No more iron philosophy has been sung in this day than that which some critics acclaim as rustic and homely."

Yet, aside from noting some lapses into prosiness, he has nothing but praise for Housman's artistry: ". . . allowing a proportion of poems where simplicity becomes insipidity, this is yet the annunciation of a new and valuable voice in present poetry. Sometimes grim, strong, close-knit, commanding attention by its virile pessimism . . . it is individual work, to which the reader will return with deepening interest and admiration."

It is worthy of note that Housman returned to Thompson's mind a few years later when he was trying to express how deeply he had been moved by a volume of poems by Alice Meynell. "These poems [of Mrs. Meynell] have stirred [me] more deeply than any others read for the first time in recent years, with the possible exception of 'A Shropshire Lad,'" he says. For anyone acquainted with the depth of Thompson's admiration for Alice Meynell, both as a person and as a poet, this is the highest possible tribute that Thompson could pay to Housman's artistry, and the strongest evidence of Thompson's catholicity of taste.

One of the great pleasures of this book is Thompson's prose style. It is strong, graceful, adapts readily to any subject matter, and is seasoned with tandy and apt turns of phrase that provide just the right sauce of novelty without obtrusiveness. Thus, he observes—apropos of Abelard's egotism and his disparage-

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ment of his former teacher—St. Anselm, to whom Abelard owed so much: "Mounted on the shoulders of Anselm's labours, the brilliant young pupil saw only his own superiority."

He characterizes Coleridge as "that immortal dreamer, profound philosopher, and monument of instability." He notes that "Mrs. Carlyle's tongue was keener than Xantippe's, with the added deadliness of culture." He suggests wryly that the general mediocrity of religious poetry "seems only to demonstrate the inferiority of holy water to the Pierian spring as a source of inspiration." As a writer of the light essay, Dr. Johnson "is a dancing bear." Tennyson is "a thinker among shallow thinkers, and a shallow thinker among thinkers," yet his way with words gave his thought "extraneous dignity and buried it in the memory like a harpoon." The description of Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "the description of a middle-class angel on a tombstone." He chides John Davidson—an Angry Young Man of his day—for "the masterful persistence with which this poet claps Pegasus in the traces of a butcher's van." He refutes the popular misconception of Patmore "as a mild and amiable amorist. The reality was a gaunt giant, with drooping lids over eyes like the narrow gleam of a scimitar-edge, a masterful personality, and a grim vein of sardonic humour."

This review cannot conclude without some mention of the most unusual part of this volume—the final section, in which thirteen original manuscripts from the Boston College Thompsoniana are published for the first time. Some of these items are prose versions of poems or projected poems; some are extended reflections on fundamental aspects of life and literature. They range widely in tone—for example, this passage from "Modern Men: The Devil" carries something of the touch of Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*.

For the Devil's trade, it has changed less than his methods. He is still, like his ancient adversary, St. Peter, a fisher of men. He deals in souls like a politician, and gets them nowadays for almost as little. Though no Royal Commission has taken note of it, he is the primal employer of cheap labor; and has best advantage of these times, since he needs not to fear Unions among his workers; for other employes unite to damn their master, but his to damn themselves.

In quite another vein, "Out of the House of Bondage" discusses the limitations which the body puts on the spirit in the way of communion with others.

To impart themselves, to be understood—that is the final travail of all men; except some noble few who would yet more gladly receive and understand. To attain both is the most soaring of human ambitions: to attain either the most seldom-compassed of human experiences. The very means by which we prepare its fulfillment, prepare its frustration. We move, all of us, under disguises, the rending of which would leave life intolerable, the presence of which makes life a doubt. The very fairnesses of life are its falsenesses. . . . Comprehension, we discover, is not communion. This is the immitigable ache of life, this is the unstanchable sorrow of existence. . . . We are cohabiting mutes.

This is but a taste of the prevailing quality of these hitherto unpublished essays. They provide a fitting crown for a remarkable book.

Felix Doherty

BOOK REVIEWS

A Maze of Herbage

The Grass. By Claude Simon. Translated by Richard Howard. George Braziller, Inc. \$3.75.

LIKE *L'Herbe* (1958), its French original, this skillfully translated version will appeal only to that minority band of readers who have the forbearance and intellectual stamina needed for grappling with novels whose form, characterized by a studied incoherence, sometimes threatens to put their content to rout. An increasingly important practitioner of France's "new novel," Claude Simon strains the limits of novelistic inventiveness and numbs the brains of his readers, these having to be constantly about their wits lest they lose themselves in the byways of his chaotic narrative or drown in his torrents of words. Be that as it may, a story, if in its plotlessness it may thus be termed, pierces through the haze.

Marie, an octogenarian spinster, lies dying in a dim, suffocating upstairs room of a vast and dilapidated old chateau, her persistent death rattle further unsettling the dreary lives of her dreary kin. Now consumed by his excessive bulk and drained of spiritual energy, Pierre, her brother, fifteen years her junior, a professor whose schooling and economically advantageous marriage Marie's heroic self-sacrifice had made possible, struggles vainly to check the alcoholism and ridiculous jealousy of Sabine, his wife. She, in turn, distraught over her failure to stem the ravages that time has inflicted upon her flesh, strives to camouflage them with thick layers of cosmetics, orange hair dyes, and flamboyantly-colored gowns. Georges, their ne'er-do-well son, leads a life of general dissipation and further depletes the family's waning resources by stubbornly attempting to maintain a large pear-orchard under impossible natural conditions. In her disgust with his mediocrity, Louise, his wife and the book's narrator, has sought vengeance in her own infidelity. During the ten days' death-agony of her husband's aunt she regularly meets her lover in a nearby grove, trying, but failing, to solidify her resolve to escape with him, seemingly restrained by the memory of the old woman's kindnesses toward her. Such is the action—or want of it.

As in Proust's opus, much is made of the time motif—of time annihilated, of time decelerating, accelerating, accumulating. But time is never regained in the Proustian sense, for here the reminiscences awakened by superannuated newspaper headlines, yellowed photographs, hoary accounting ledgers, and broken-down old clocks serve only to point up the provisional character of everything, of time's terrible erosions. Furthermore, it is more than intimated that time is hardly worth regaining, since the abject characters seem not to have been markedly less wretched in days past. And, alas, the author sees no life beyond the grave for these poor souls. Life is, then, a hollow mockery, an ugly travesty, with the author pulling out all stops to make it appear so. An ugly world, it follows, must be peopled by repulsive humans. Thus, Pierre is variously described as "pachydermous," a "mass of flesh," a "misshapen mass," carrying a "terrible and parasitical burden of dead meat, like a man forced to carry around forever the corpse of another man tied to his body." Sabine is an "old diva," a "Madame Butterfly in her brilliant kimino, with her ravaged, ruined mask," a "lush covered with diamonds," an "old, hiccouguing Dejeaneira." Georges, whose ribs "protrude like the ribs of perpetually-famished dogs," always wears a starved-dog's expression. The nurse in attendance is "a little hunchback of indeterminate age," with a "strange, mild clown's face" and an "absurd and macabre doll's

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mouth." Even the innocent Marie, largely ignored while noisily breathing out her last, is not spared. She is an "old, fragile heap of bones," with fingers "like dry sticks" and a head that is a "hollow ball of bone." Her face is "mummified," "like a parchment mask," "the papery mask of Rameses II." As if recoiling with nausea from the grotesques he has engendered, Simon depersonalizes them, keeps them at arm's length by regularly alluding to them in clichés. They become "the fat man," "the hunchback," "the old woman," and so on. The olfactory leitmotif is the moribund odor of thousands of aborted pears rotting on the warm September earth, and is at times reinforced with the "aroma of fruit dying in cupboards, on newspaper-covered shelves . . . exhaling an odor of death, decomposition, stagnant, sealed." Appropriately, the story's only animal is a tirelessly prowling, exceptionally eerie cat with an instinct for appearing at untoward moments.

Whereas life is portrayed as undifferentiated in its daily drabness, *The Grass*, as previously implied, is anything but undifferentiated in its construction. Indeed, it would appear that Simon has enlisted in his effort just about every technical device known in the laboratories of the new French school of novelists, far too many, surely, to permit enumeration here. Punctuation is at best freakish; at worst, non-existent. Cinematic montage is continuously resorted to. Short, fragmented dialogues are interspersed with interior monologues that stretch over a half-dozen pages. Uncompleted, meaningless sentences fuse in with others which meander along almost interminably—syntactical mazes of unfettered reminiscence, description, parenthetical references, philosophical asides, and pure gibberish. Not infrequently the trivial rims in the monumental, benefitting from a punctilious and minute attentiveness more worthy of the latter. Detail is piled on detail, adjectives multiply adjectives, and meanings are mischievously refined out of existence by stylistic tricks. Finally, ellipses, anaphora, and hyperbatons, familiar ingredients of stream-of-consciousness writing, abound in this designedly disjointed novel by a brilliant artificer and powerful evocator with an ulcerized vision of life.

University of Connecticut

Chester W. Obuchowski

Something Rare

The Arts, Artists and Thinkers. Edited by John M. Todd. Macmillan. \$3.75.

THIS work is exceptionally valuable, stimulating and delightful. It does not, to be sure, live up to the full promise of its subtitle ("An Enquiry into the Place of the Arts in Human Life") since it does not deal with all the arts, nor does it approach them from any but our late-occidental point of view. But it does deal very searchingly with several questions of general and vital interest: what have we a right to expect from this or that major art; what are the artist's rights and obligations as composer or executant; and what are the philosophic attitudes to be adopted, or the fallacies to be avoided, by those who wish to appreciate the arts justly?

The various writers who contribute to this discussion are persons of wide experience and deep conviction, and are also blessed with the ability to treat their subjects wittily, gracefully, humanely. They have achieved something rare:

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a superbly edited record of a symposium which, while controversial, is smooth with the uncton of urbanity. It takes courage to say many of the things these speakers say; and it takes great skill to say them so casually and gently that even the tender-minded reader will accept them for unbiased consideration, for much that is said here contradicts flatly the tenets that certain intellectual liberals have come to take for granted.

In his article "The Freedom of the Imagination," for instance, Alan Pryce-Jones, Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, feels free to make such incidental remarks as the following:

At this point, I suppose, it is apposite to mention James Joyce, and perhaps in the same breath Ezra Pound, as obvious examples of what can be done in prose and in verse by allowing the imagination an unchecked rein. A great quantity has been written about both of them . . . Is Joyce really much more than a very complicated, very private, very carefully constructed joke . . . ? Is Pound, at least when he is writing verse, much more than an amusingly industrious taker of notes: lyrical [but] indecipherably wrapped in shorthand? And does it really justify a lifetime to offer no more than that? . . . And once the imagination is locked away among its own secrets, as it is in such books as *Finnegans Wake* and Pound's *Cantos*, it evaporates. Nobody, I believe, will ever struggle with the real difficulties of writers such as these except in a spirit of puzzlesolving which is quite alien to the spirit of literature . . .

. . . A much more exciting result is achieved, I think, when the imagination is fired by something outside itself—something to which it chooses to be ancillary. The most obvious case, perhaps, is Shakespeare's: . . . Shakespeare was a practical commercial dramatist who happened to possess . . . a vaulting imagination which could be used to make his plays immortal. Not that his imagination was utterly free. Its use was conditioned by the difficult political situation of the time, the needs of the theatre, by a very human respect for his audience . . . So that it comes to look as if the imagination, whether free or not, must be considered as a means rather than an end. That is, it must not be encouraged to get above itself . . . It must be kept in focus as one part, and no more, of the creative temperament.

As this quotation may indicate, the main topics dealt with throughout the symposium are those of the necessity for imaginative freedom on one hand, and on the other the need for discipline and for self-dedication. What Mary Drage, the dancer, says on these topics is, in fact, quite typical. "Dancing," she points out, "demands a continual search and striving after the perfect performance. This is not just an idea fostered in us by high-minded philosophers and critics of the dance." Then she goes on to suggest the consequences of this love of perfection. "This need of single-mindedness and the absolute necessity of a vocational attitude towards dancing raises grave problems. For the Russian dancers these problems hardly exist—they are heirs to a great tradition . . . a tradition which treats dancing vocationally . . . In the West today it is a different matter. For most people ballet is just a technique . . . So it is that a dancer's life here is a special strain. One begins to have the feeling that in order to be a great dancer one should not marry and that one must devote all one's energies exclusively to

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dancing. And this leads one to suppose that a great dancer could not be a true Christian."

Commenting on Miss Drage's talk, the editor remarks:

... It was impossible not to feel a certain dissatisfaction with the conventional reassurances provided for the artists by their fellow Christians; these hardly measured up to the difficulty. 'The dancer's life is justified if it is all lived for God.' The objection that most dancers are not Christians was answered by saying that their dedication to the dance is a kind of religious dedication without their knowing it. But this hardly helps the Christian faced with a division of loyalties. The tension which a Christian artist working in such a milieu must suffer is great; but at least it is only a heightening of a tension that must be faced by every Christian artist ...

The third section of the book, entitled "Criticizing the Arts," while slightly less interesting than the other sections, does contain a criticism of the mass media arts which is better, I believe, than anything else that has appeared so far. This is the talk given by Robert Waller, a man of wide experience in the production of radio programs. The passage which gives what is perhaps his most important view reads as follows:

Our use of technical inventions reflects our philosophy of life and the sort of people we are ... one might think that, when the mass media open up the opportunity to ordinary people to become familiar with the arts, culture would flourish and men's souls would broaden and enrich. That is a charming Victorian idea; the temple doors of the palace of art have been opened to the masses [but] the enjoyment of art ... requires spiritual preparation and a humble willingness to have one's egotism invaded by forces that are outside oneself, unknown and unfamiliar. The souls of men deprived of religion are clamped down tight by their own egotism; they want neither art, nor God, nor the intrusion of coloured races into their sphere consciousness. All they want to see is their own perfect image writ large over the universe ... they want to hear exclusively about themselves on television, radio and in parliament. The spiritual, artistic and political progress of mankind depends upon splitting open this subjective fortress, this unrelaxing central ego in the natural man. But far from any such attempt being made or regarded as necessary, the whole trend of society is to flatter egotism, pander to provincial taste, and make the natural man feel he is indeed the very voice of God on earth ...

The final section of the book presents talks by philosophers on basic and current theories of aesthetics. Of these the most stimulating and delightful is the talk given by Vincent Turner, S.J.—a study that is unique, I believe, in philosophic criticism. Julian Benda once pointed out that it is much more important for us to have a sense of the people's view of the dominant theories of their time (their understanding of evolution or of relativity, for instance) than it is to know exactly what these theories are. Not only does Father Turner realize this fact, but he also takes a step further and shows how important the *ghost* of a theory can be among scholars. He here examines the Crocean ideas that have been absorbed so osmotically that they have gained unquestioned adherence, pointing out how "the desolation of aesthetics" has been produced by a system

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of thought basically a priori and unreal. His thesis is fairly well indicated by the following passage:

The situation is faithfully reflected in all aestheticians and in Croce; it is made retrospective and a simple version of it is rationalized into a story about the essence of pure art. Art is not craft and has nothing to do with technique; there can be no religious art; magical art and hedonistic art are not art proper; art is the primary self-expression of spirit, a pre-logical spontaneous expression of pure imagination; art is pure subjectivity, and this is pure freedom, or rather (I quote from Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*) 'in proportion as the creativity of the spirit strives for greater liberation in order for the Self to be revealed in the work, Nature discloses greater obstacles, or, rather, demands from poetic intuition a ceaselessly growing power, in order for things to be grasped and expressed in the work, without hampering or thwarting the simultaneous expression of subjectivity and the freedom of the creative spirit.' It takes a philosopher to elevate historical contingent facts into a mode of the necessary self-expression of the human spirit and the pure essence of art, and a neo-scholastic to make out that they follow from the first principles of a metaphysic of man.

"Of course," Waller goes on to say, "if what is meant by all this talk is that a painter, let us say, can do good work only if he is free to paint as he genuinely thinks or feels, and that his work will be bad . . . if he pretends to what he does not feel or if he produces simply the branded goods that the public happens to esteem, then no one would disagree with anything so elementary." But, is it necessary to "sky-rocket into a world of essences and pure subjectivity"? This, as Waller suggests, seems to be going too far.

Almost the only legitimate criticism that might be lodged against this symposium is that these artists, critics, historians, and philosophers are a little too much inclined, as modern occidentals, to look upon the arts individualistically, that is, as works prosecuted by individuals for individuals. As a result they too frequently overlook issues that medievals or even modern orientals would find important—liturgical and communal issues. So it is that they fail sufficiently to distinguish liturgical art from generally religious art and this latter, in turn, from that which is pursued by the artist in a spirit of religious self-dedication. Nor do they give a sufficiently *positive* assessment of the contributions of the arts to the life of normal society—the kind of assessment that might be given, in far simpler terms of course, by a tribal sage.

But I must not end on a derogatory note. Whatever one may finally think of this book, it will prove remarkably bracing and nourishing. If nothing else, its provocativeness alone would be worth its cost—as would also its scholarliness and sophistication.

John Julian Ryan

A Catalogue of Criticism

The Christian Theatre. By Robert Speaight. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1960. \$2.95.

THIS BOOK is volume 24 of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism. It appears under section XII, Catholicism and The Arts, and it is also the 41st volume in order of total publication. It is, as the publication information states, an *encyclopedia* of the Christian theater, and we must regard it as such.

At the outset, Speaight defines his intention to "trace the Christian presence in the more important section of European drama during the past 700 years," rather than confine himself "to those plays which had been written with a devotional intention."

Certainly no one at all familiar with the theater of the West would dispute the author's contention that Christianity is an important theme or that Christian values are an important influence on the theater. Christianity *was* the theater in the Middle Ages with its liturgical drama, miracle plays, mysteries, and moralities; and the 16th and 17th century theater, especially in England, was steeped in Christian tradition to the extent that, as Speaight rightfully says, one must understand Christianity in order to understand the plays.

But in spite of his own view that in his book "criticism has been reduced to the proportion of a catalogue [which] cannot claim to be comprehensive," a reader must wonder that Shakespeare alone is assigned 20 of the 140 pages of text, which, one hastens to add, is none too much, while the whole of western theater since Racine is also given 20 pages. An American might feel further cheated by the unqualified title when he discovers that American theater is dealt with in one very short paragraph in which O'Neill and MacLeish are barely mentioned.

As one might expect of the author of *Nature in Shakespearean Tragedy*, it is in his treatment of Shakespeare that Speaight abandons his "cataloguing" and has something to say. One example only: his treatment of *The Tempest*, in six pages, is as rewarding as it is succinct. This perceptive discussion does not insist upon agreement, but statements such as the following suddenly confront a reader with a critical demand which must be wrestled with, even if finally subdued: "In *The Tempest* magic is provisionally sanctified in order that morality may do its work." Or again: "And the whole effort of Shakespeare's mind in *The Tempest* . . . was to realize the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." Or about Ariel: "It is as a priest and not as a man that Ariel obeys him [Prospero]." Or about Caliban: "In the Shakespearean universe, Caliban is the final spontaneity, and his drama is an image magnified, but hardly distorted, of the fall of man." Or, finally: "The point of the play is incarnation."

The difference between the two kinds of material in his book is that the criticism, on *The Tempest*, for example, would impel a reader to re-read the play; but with much of the book the cataloguing would turn an interested seeker in the direction of other secondary sources, a more complete book on the subject, such as Hardin Graig's *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* which Speaight lists in a small but adequate bibliography of references most of which were published after 1953.

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As a book, then, *Christian Theatre* is uneven because it seems unable to make up its mind whether to catalogue or criticize—to be a provocative and perceptive essay on the place of Christianity and Christian values in Western Theater.

Although the fluctuating aspect of this short book may be disconcerting, and in the case of the catalogue parts, disappointing, *Christian Theatre* has value if its material is regarded less as encyclopedic fact and more as suggestion for further exploration.

Montana State University

Douglas Bankson

A Daedel Scope

Symbolism in Religion and Literature. Edited with an Introduction by Rollo May. George Braziller. \$5.00.

THESE TEN essays, most of which first appeared in Volume 87 of *Daedalus*, deserve the collocation of their hard binding, if one keeps in mind that the literature of the title is to be construed in a broad, Newmanesque sense, and not exclusively as *belles lettres*. In an earlier work, *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychology and Psychiatry*, Rollo May alerted the lay reader in this country to the exciting and fresh approaches of existential and phenomenological description, analysis, and therapy. Now he continues the new dimension in his present introduction, "The Significance of Symbolism," which weaves together the case history of a young lawyer, the Oedipus myth, and the crisis in contemporary values. The case history presents a concrete example of the existential therapist's belief that guided self-help is the best. He insists upon the diologic polarity of dream symbols, for the patient must be helped to realize that such symbols are "mothered" by the archaic material in so-called unconscious depths, but "fathered" by the individual's conscious existence in his immediate struggles." We are reminded, moreover, that the sanative integration of the hero in *Oedipus at Colonus* is as much a part of the myth as his psychic lacerations in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. If Freud forgot this, he nevertheless found the story of Oedipus at Thebes genuinely tragic, and did not commit the Rousseauian error that a baby is essentially social, a vegetarian angel. May also parallels the bad nerves of Hellenistic and Roman history with modern *Angst*: ancient *ataraxia* and *apatheia* (however poor the Epicurean and Stoic doctrines may have been as therapy) were in fact crucial responses to the same kind of mass hysteria, quiet desperation, and malaise which have brought forth psychoanalysis.

In "The Cross: Social Trauma or Redemption" Amos N. Wilder stresses that a number of modern writers, because of their own peculiar suspicions with-in various cultural presentisms, have distorted the facts of the one true "myth"—the life of Christ. Some of the more bizarre varieties of religious and artistic experience have drawn parallels that never touch: "the poet-Christ of Renan or of William Ellery Leonard, the antinomian oracle of Nietzsche and of Gide, the 'man of genius' of Middleton Murray, the 'Comrade Jesus' of some Marxists, the esoteric initiate of George Moore and now of Robert Graves, and the pacifist-anarchist of Faulkner's *Fable*," not to mention the sexy Jesus of D. H. Lawrence, or the barbaric hipster of the beatniks. In addition, there has been Jesus the psychologist, the first psychiatrist, and the sociologist. This last leads to a

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discussion of Robinson Jeffers' poetic drama, *Dear Judas*, and to Jeffers' belief that Christ's solution to the problem of evil in its sociological manifestations is "insane." Wilder presents a balanced and impartial explanation of Jeffers' Lucretian, Spenglerian Inhumanism; at the same time, however, he contrasts the reportorial austerity of the Evangelists, for whom the description of Christ's last hours is a revelation. That Easter is just as important as Good Friday perhaps demands not only reiteration but restating.

One of the foremost interpreters of the literary and philosophic implications of symbolic activity gives a preview of his forthcoming work on "logology." Kenneth Burke, in his discussion of the first three chapters of Genesis, distinguishes between rectilinear and circular terminology, between the narrative or temporal and the political or eternal. He first subjects to linguistic analysis such key theological, moral, and political terms as Creation, Covenant, Fall, Sacrifice, and Redemption and then shows how each entails the others, so that they all can operate as components within a set of definitions. Burke rightly applies his findings to the thought of Hobbes who, it might be noted, was inclined to hold that in its purest form philosophy should be a system of tautologies, a behemoth, self-contained sorities of interchangeable terms (rather like modern mass production). Philosophy for him was chiefly a method of investigating "the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand," of determining the mutations and permutations of initial definitions. Moreover, there is a timeless quality about his rationalism in that his politics is always available for enactment. Burke performs an interesting analysis on Hobbes' theory of Covenant, a term that implies its opposite, Counter-Covenant, just as the secular half of the *Leviathan* implies its religious half, or "Of a Christian Commonwealth" implies "Of the Kingdom of Darkness." The seventeenth-century philosopher's amazing verbal manipulations, with their tincture of Manichaeism, whereby the religious "children of light" become the "children of darkness," confirm Burke's conclusion: "Hobbes's strongly nationalist position made it inevitable that Roman Catholicism would be his scapegoat."

In addition, Talcott Parsons describes the origins and present features of "denominational pluralism," the pattern of religious organization in the United States, while Paul Tillich insists that the genetic theory which attempts to deny the objective content of religious symbolism as merely an ideological expression of the style or form of a culture is itself open to the same criticism. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. views the major crisis in post-Romantic literature as the disappearance of a common reservoir of funded myth. That most mysterious and symbolic of Renaissance poems, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," undergoes a brilliant scrutiny by I. A. Richards, who suggests that the main speaker is the reborn Phoenix herself, "summoning the birds to the celebration of her own (and the Turtle's) obsequies." To leave the contemplation of their cinders for a consideration of subatomic particles is to investigate the representational activities of the nuclear physicist. His interpretations of dials, gauges, and meters do not achieve a direct knowledge, but rather, as Werner Heisenberg explains, an inferred, abstracted picture of man's relation to nature. And the essence of the greatest created symbols, as Erich Kahler understands them, is to become progressively autotelic and split off from their sources.

In the concluding essay on the multiple uses of symbolism, Alfred North

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Whitehead observes: "it seems as though mankind must always be masquerading." This epigram conveys nicely the daedal scope of this stimulating volume.

St. Louis University

Louis F. May

Noise or Velocity?

The Poems of St. John of the Cross; New English Versions. Transl. by John Frederick Nims. The Grove Press, Evergreen Books. \$1.95.

I HAVE chosen the rhythms and forms of the original instead of turning the content into a slack free verse . . . I have aimed at the kind of diction St. John used: a diction direct and colloquial . . . I have tried to do something about the sound values and special sound effects." Reviewing could be more precise if more translators would explain their aims as John Nims does. The beleaguered "art" of translation could emerge more quickly from its Dark Ages.

The observations in this review will refer to "The Spiritual Canticle." The tenets that Nims explains in his twenty-eight pages of notes will be used as a kind of vantage point. Of course, since a translator can transfer to another language only a few aspects of the original poem, it is possible to find in English equivalences of St. John's poetry without necessarily following the paths Nims has chosen.

When Nims says that he has "chosen the rhythm and forms of the original" he means that he has used full rhyme for Spanish *consonancia* and followed the *lira* form of the original by having the tenth syllable of the long lines bear the last accent, and the sixth syllable in the short lines. But what about the other accented syllables in the line? They have much less regularity than in the original and this makes it difficult to know how the poem should be read in English. The patterns made by these other accented syllables are not sufficiently established. The reader's ear does not tell him that "the tingle of" should be read as three syllables. In the original St. John guides the ear with a very steady hand. Dámaso Alonso, whom Nims quotes, attributed the velocity of St. John's eleven syllable line to the fact that the stress falls regularly (in "The Spiritual Canticle," invariably) on the sixth syllable. Since, Alonso continues, the eighth syllable is rarely accented, once the hurdle has been made on the sixth syllable all is well until the next one comes up on the tenth syllable. What matters as far as velocity is concerned, if this can be stated as principle, is the number of unaccented syllables you can glide over. This principle can probably be applied also to English verse. Marianne Moore has been following this principle and applying it in her poetry for decades: "I try to secure an effect of flowing continuity . . . I have a liking for the long [accented] syllable followed by three or more short [unaccented] syllables: 'Lying on the air there is a bird.'" Nims, however, thinks it impossible: "St. John makes an astonishing departure by balancing his lines invariably to the acme of the sixth syllable (an effect that I doubt can be reproduced in English)." Yet Nims has lines in which the sixth is accented and not the eighth: "of something heard ecstatic in the stammer." Why not more of this? Why a constant hammering produced by too many accented syllables? Its effect is confusion and noise, not velocity. Roy Campbell's

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translation also has this defect. To quote Marianne Moore again: "With regard to unwarinesses that defeat precision excess is the common substitute for energy."

Nims wants his translations to be modern American poems. He achieves this in his diction and syntax in which he is far superior to Roy Campbell whose diction is often antique, his inversion far from natural; this line, for instance: "only now in loving is my duty." The corresponding line in Nims is: "My occupation: love. It's all I do." However, this is not one of the best lines of Nims in other respects: the colon calls for a unit of silence which is not well used here. If there is anything old fashioned in Nims it is his feeling that full end rhyme in English is the equivalent of Spanish *consonancia* today, *consonancia* as it is used in the Spanish *lira*. The history of *consonancia* in Spanish poetry makes this equivalence questionable, as well as the differences in the phonemic systems of both languages. Full rhyme is not as popular with American poets today as *consonancia* is with contemporary Spanish poets. To the Spanish ear this poem of St. John of the Cross sounds very modern. The best Spanish poetry does not date itself in the same way the best poetry in English does. After all, Spain is a very traditional country.

There is a jerkiness in the translation of Nims that the translation of Campbell does not have. But Nims is still preferable because the flow of Campbell's verses is a nineteenth century one; Campbell is full of old-fashioned overtones and resonances which Nims has completely eliminated. And in so doing Nims has done us the service of presenting St. John in sounds which are more pleasing to the modern ear.

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d. December 26, 1960

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